THE DOUBLENESS of SEXUALITY

IDIOMS OF SAME-SEX DESIRE IN MODERN INDIA

AKHIL KATYAL

PO : 672350
I-E-2019328112
Stanford University

SHOUT
SHARE
IT

The Doubleness of Sexuality

The Doubleness of Sexuality

Idioms of Same-Sex Desire in Modern India

AKHIL KATYAL

NEW TEXT

NEW TEXT New Text Publications Private Limited
F-14 Hauz Khas Enclave, New Delhi 110016

First published 2016

New Text is an independent academic publishing initiative committed to creating an "open access" publishing model to promote equitable and affordable access to qualitative academic material and to encourage authors by implementing a fairer reward system. New Text is committed to making the text of this entire book available under an open access license and this shall be done in a phased manner with the periodic release of chapters online under a Creative Commons Attribution Non-Commercial license.

Till such time, the author and New Text assert their copyright over the work and no person shall reproduce any portion of this work in part or full by any means for any commercial purposes. The author also asserts his moral rights to the work. You are, however, free to exercise your fair dealing rights including reproducing the work for educational and research purposes. For details on when extracts or the entire work is available under an open access license, please visit our website www.newtext.in

ISBN: 978-1-63587-832-5

Typeset in 11/14 Balaram by Jojy Philip
Printed by Saurabh Printers Pvt. Ltd
Published by New Text

For Priya Thangarajah
(1982–2015)

...we will, for your sake,
keep safe in our hands, all the evenings
that won't let you go.

Contents

List of illustrations ix

Acknowledgements xi

1. Introduction: Idioms of Same-Sex Desire, Doubleness of Sexuality 1
2. *Laundebaazi*: Of Habits, Politics and Modernity in North India 68
3. On PlanetRomeo: Indian Men as Gay, as Lovers, as Friends 118
4. The Art of Personal Narratives: Sexuality and Narration in Activism 168
5. The Doubleness of Gay Writing 234
6. Doubleness as Politics: Final Remarks 266

Glossary 275

Bibliography 279

Illustrations

2.1 Advertisement for *Chaklet* in Ugra's *Dilli ka Dalal*, June 1928 — 79

2.2 Advertisement for *Chaklet* in Ugra's *Chand Haseenon ke Khutoot*, December 1928 — 81

3.1 PlanetRomeo homepage — 121

Acknowledgements

Gautam Bhan saw promise in this book. It is largely due to him, both as a rigorous editor and an encouraging friend, that this book sees light of day.

Lawrence Cohen read a draft of this manuscript and his comments were as scrupulous as they were tender. Several ideas in this book owe their shape to his work and comments.

Geeta Patel saw this work through its years, from a doctoral dissertation till its present form. Her passion for some of its ideas exceeded mine and her imprint is (hopefully) discernible in the way some parts of this book were written.

Vineeta Rai at New Text has been both patient and painstaking in working with this manuscript. Any errors left are mine alone.

Francesca Orsini, Caroline Osella and Amina Yaqin, my remarkable supervisors at the School of Oriental and African Studies, suggested several of the ideas in the book and helped me develop them.

This book has been incubated in the love and friendship of several people, in Delhi and London—Lalita Subbu, Anindyo Roy, Anusha Hariharan, Anannya Dasgupta, Kartik Nair, Inayat Anaita Sabhikhi, Pavitr Rastogi, Vaibhav Iype Parel, Teja Varma, Rovel Sequeira, Brinda Bose, Sonal Sharma, Suroopa Mukherjee,

Tapan Basu, Sameer Chopra, Dhrubo Jyoti, Dhiren Borisa, Vqueeram Aditya Sahai, Vasugi Kailasam, Deepti Sharma, Akshara Ravishankar, Aditi Rao, Mario Da Penha, Vebhuti Duggal, akshay khanna, Sahana Bajpaie, Neil Philip Paul Christey, Jean Philippe Dequen, Shalini Sharma, Kadambari Mishra and Priya Thangarajah.

1

Introduction

Idioms of Same-Sex Desire, Doubleness of Sexuality

This book makes two main arguments. One, that there are many intersecting idioms of same-sex desire in India, the breadth and romance of all of which cannot be captured solely within the idea of 'homosexuality', which is just one of these idioms. Two, that 'sexuality' is marked by what I call doubleness, whereby there is a constant tension between the way it is conceptualised and the way it is lived out. This doubleness of sexuality ensures that no matter how much the 'gay' or 'lesbian' subject is given specific contours, like in various forms of identity politics and literary genres that centre around sexuality, that subject's position will remain, in actual experience, always open-ended and contested, always forming and unforming.

The first argument—about the multiplicity of the intersecting idioms of same-sex desire—opens up an exciting arena, which is a testament to the fact that people have always leveraged a heady richness of vocabulary and idioms to bring into language that which they feel and desire. This is an arena in which I write not so much a simple history of 'homosexuality' in 20th and 21st century India but instead one where, through what I call 'idioms', I lay

out some wider genealogies of same-sex desire for the same time period. The idiom of homosexuality, wherein the homosexual is an identifiable and isolable creature, often on some given medico-juridical terms, has more than a 100-year-old provenance in the subcontinent, ever since its appearance from the late 19th century onwards in various forms of "colonial scientism", when it was used both by the British and the Indian elite (Arondekar 2009, p. 11; see Nandy 1995; Legg 2012). Later formations of visibile gay and lesbian identity politics in India since at least the 1980s would preserve and politically build on this identifiability and isolability that was latent in the idea of the homosexual, so that some specific bodies could be constituted as a viable minority and made into subjects of rights. I argue in this book that this substantial history of homosexuality, and of gay and lesbian identity in the subcontinent, is shot through and made more complicated and exciting by other idioms of same-sex desire which interact with them; these idioms neither confer as much definite identifiability or isolability to a people like the idiom of homosexuality does, nor might they be politically mobilisable *in the same way* that the idiom of gay and lesbian identities are. These are widely present and often specifically social and cultural idioms, be that of habits (*aadat*¸ *lat*, *baazi*), of friendship (*dost*, *saheli*, *yaar*), of play (*masti*, *baazi*, *shauk*), of love (*ishq*, *dil*, *pyaar*), through which same-sex desire operates in common discourse, through which it finds shape in language and through which it is often framed, understood, appasioned and lived out to varying degrees of happiness and duress. This book opens up an arena in which all these idioms—juridical or social, medical or cultural, isolable or general—interact with each other, where they almost never occur singly, always forming constellations and which, all put together, finally force us to be more creative when we look for the sites and semiotics of same-sex desire in 20th and 21st century India.

The second argument—about the doubleness of sexuality—was arrived at through a series of what earlier seemed to me to be odd and paradoxical events. Let me briefly mention four of these. First, during the years of my participation in queer activism in Delhi, I often noted activists using the word 'queer' to theoretically mean something different from Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT), somehow more expansive and more intersectional. But these same activists continued to use the allegedly narrower terms such as lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender in the actual course of their political protests, everyday lives and humour. Were they simply contradicting themselves or was something more interesting underway that defined the nature of their political practice? Second, an Indian gay Muslim man wrote for an anthology of 'queer politics' and claimed in his personal narrative that he had rejected his religious identity to embrace his sexuality completely; however, in the same narrative he mentioned that he found himself occasionally returning to his 'Muslimness' when he discovered that PlanetRomeo users have a fetish for Muslim men. Was he missing the contradication he was making or was there something more complex in the relationship between sexuality and selfhood? Third, an editor of an anthology of 'gay literature' that I'd read, initially claimed that such anthologies contained only 'gay writers' writing 'gay content', but during longer conversations revealed that the label of gay literature was a confusing and loosely fenced category that decided its content through many different pragmatic and non-sexuality related criteria, which often did not festishise the sexuality of the author or of his characters. Was the editor lying on the cover page then or was there something more exciting in the relationship between sexuality and the formation of literary genres? Fourth, people I often met in the 'field' would tell me very affecting stories of how they discovered their lesbian or *kothi* or gay identity, how they arrived at a realisation of 'what they always were' and, some months later, the same people would tell me how

they now identify as something else and we would joke about it. Were they lying before or was it that sexuality-as-declaration was something distinct from sexuality-as-process? Thinking about such examples made me articulate the idea of doubleness, which helped me engage with the debates on sexual subjectivity and argue for a complex and always playful relationship between sexuality and selfhood.

The idea of doubleness made me consider sexuality as behaving differently on different planes, with several cleavages between its theories and practices. Sexuality was not so much a given psychic truth or a bodily condition, but instead a persuasive historical idiom that made such conceptual claims. I studied several instances in which the concept of sexuality was invoked in identity politics and literature, and found that rather than acting like an apriori given in relation to the self or like a closed code, as it is supposed to by definition wherein it is over-marked as a defined species, it instead behaved more inconsistently and open-endedly in political and literary practice. It also begged to be argued that the tension between the definition and practice of sexuality was something of an open secret. This is often loosely available to people who transact in the idioms of homosexuality and gay and lesbian identities—activists, non-activists, editors, contributors—who are then able to see and even work on both these planes of definition and practice, creating situations wherein people embrace the truth-telling, species-forming, community-making seductions of the concept of sexuality even as their experience and its telling contradicts many of those traits. In this book, mainly through a close discussion of personal narratives in LGBT activist publications and of the genre of gay and lesbian literature where I see this doubleness at play, I argue that politics and literature based on sexuality are less the sites of easy closure and more of continuing and open contestation.[1]

[1] It is imperative to note, as will become evident in the course of this book,

ON DOUBLENESS: A CONVERSATION WITH AKSHAY KHANNA

One of the works I read while writing this book was a doctoral thesis by my friend akshay khanna.[2] In my early years of being part of 'sexuality' activism in Delhi, akshay was someone I knew of, someone whom my other activist friends knew better, with whom they had spent a good deal of time debating about their everyday political choices as activists, working on petitions, thinking through strategies, organising protests; he was someone they had loved, fought and bantered with, and listened to. In those years, between 2006 and 2008, akshay was in and out of Delhi, doing fieldwork for his own PhD thesis that he was to submit later in Edinburgh as *A Refracted Subject: Sexualness in the Realms of Law and Epidemiology* (2010).[3] The thesis reflected akshay to the bone, someone whom I had come to know better during my years in London; it reflected his passion and politics, his quantum of experience and engagement with what being an activist around issues of sexuality in India had meant in the last 15 years, how it had changed, how it held both frustration and promise in equal measure.

Reading his work, I found myself at the centre of my own concerns, both theoretical and political. I got the sense of

> the complementary nature of its two major ideas—that of the doubleness of sexuality and of the idioms of same-sex desire. They act like corollaries of each other. It is only through the many everyday cleavages between the concept and the practices of sexuality that several other idioms of same-sex desire are able to relate to it, sneak into its narratives and politics, and qualify some of its features and assumptions. Conversely, it is only through its ability to respond to and operate within this larger terrain of idioms, that sexuality is able to entrench its political and affective resourcefulness.

[2] The choice of the lower case letters for his name is akshay's own. It is, I presume with some confidence, part of his abiding experimentation, as will become clear in the discussion of his work, with the common markers and protocols that designate the self and how we use them in our day-to-day lives. Using the upper case for our names is just one example.

[3] Draft shared on email, 19 November 2010.

understanding further the people who inhabit my own book and the texts that populate it. But what was better and is true only of genuinely compelling works, I got the sense of being understood by his thesis, of finding some of my own unresolved thoughts transcribed with beautiful precision and proof. I found myself comparing notes with him, learning other halves of the same stories, agreeing, extending and disagreeing. It is fitting then that I introduce my argument about the doubleness of sexuality through a conversation with a friend who has thought long and deeply, and with a passion and experience that excels mine, about the same people, processes and texts. We have roamed in the same field, it seems, but there has been an unpremeditated division of labour. My earlier disciplinary training in literary studies has as much to do with this as akshay's chosen entry point of anthropology to try and understand the complex morass of issues related to same-sex desire, activism and ideas of the self in modern India.

akshay tells the story of how the moment of 2 July 2009 in Delhi "came to be" (khanna 2010, p. 11). This was the now iconic day when the High Court in Delhi read down the anti-sodomy provision, Section 377 of the Indian Penal Code, to decriminalise in no uncertain terms adult consensual same-sex relations.[4] akshay's story stretches back from this moment to the mid-to-late 1990s and is pegged on the twin poles of law and epidemiology. It considers, above all, how activists and public health professionals made way for the queer body to enter those registers which the state directly understands and transacts its business in, that is, those registers through which governance in liberal democracies proceeds. These are the two sublime registers of law, where the queer body becomes, as akshay says, "an intelligible subject

[4] This decision of the Delhi High Court was overturned by the Supreme Court on 11 December 2013. Further, on 2 February 2016, the apex court referred the curative petition against this decision to a five-judge Constitution Bench for a hearing.

vested with rights as citizen, i.e., as a citizen-subject", and that of epidemiology related with HIV-AIDS, where male queer bodies are identified, mapped and targeted as high-risk groups that endanger the "general population", where they become groups that are to be found out and intervened with, using measures over and above the usual health services of the state (khanna 2010, pp. 11–12). Only when such an entry is ensured does the state take cognisance of queer bodies, their lives, wishes and experiences. Rights activists and AIDS-related NGOs have, over the last few years, facilitated this process of recognition by the state of queer people now partially cognised in its terms.

akshay argues that the civil society sexuality activists, in consciously using the language of human rights and newly invoking the hoary legal provision of Section 377 as a stand-in for all the day-to-day problems that the mass of queer bodies face, constituted that piece of old legalese as a cause of all their present injury, and made it the medium through which they could invoke the state to recognise them and to do something about this injured condition, now framed collectively. They thus gave a broader 'social life' to a legal section, elevated it "from being a pedestrian provision of law…to the status of Law [with a capital L], the realm of a grander Legality where terms of citizenship are negotiated" (ibid., p. 118). It is only in this particular encounter with the Law, he argues, that has been playing out for the last decade-and-a-half in India, that a diverse body of activists and opinions becomes rearranged under the sign of the 'Indian queer movement', a diverse body of people find themselves represented as having a particular 'sexuality', homo or hetero, becoming a 'sexuality type' and somehow implicitly connected for that reason, somehow articulable as one 'community', a 'minority' that can be represented within the liberal democratic set-up.

What akshay is doing is interesting, both for a genealogist of sexual identities and for a political scientist interested in how democracies map their people. akshay is restaging the French

writer Louis Althusser's famous scene of the policeman hailing but with a crucial play in the sequencing of Althusser's "little theoretical theatre".[5] It is in this restaging, on different terms, that akshay rethinks that niggling question of subjectivity, the question that always rears its head when you try and understand anything that has to do with same-sex desire *in relation to* the modern institutions of the state, law or public health.

Instead of the subject coming into existence at the point of turning to face the call of law, as Althusser suggests, akshay's little historical recounting of the queer Indian activists' petition in the Delhi High Court suggests another theoretical game at hand, another sequencing of scenes. "[W]e are evoking the

[5] "I shall then suggest," Louis Althusser writes, "that ideology 'acts' or 'functions' in such a way that it 'recruits' subjects among the individuals (it recruits them all), or 'transforms' the individuals into subjects (it transforms them all) by that very precise operation which I have called interpellation or hailing, and which can be imagined along the lines of the most commonplace everyday police (or other) hailing: 'Hey, you there!'... Assuming that the theoretical scene I have imagined takes place in the street, the hailed individual will turn round. By this mere one-hundred-and-eighty-degree physical conversion, he becomes a subject. Why? Because he has recognized that the hail was 'really' addressed to him, and that 'it was really him who was hailed' (and not someone else). Experience shows that the practical telecommunication of hailings is such that they hardly ever miss their man: verbal call or whistle, the one hailed always recognizes that it is really him who is being hailed. And yet it is a strange phenomenon, and one which cannot be explained solely by 'guilt feelings', despite the large numbers who 'have something on their consciences'. Naturally for the convenience and clarity of my little theoretical theatre I have had to present things in the form of a sequence, with a before and an after, and thus in the form of a temporal succession. There are individuals walking along. Somewhere (usually behind them) the hail rings out: 'Hey, you there!' One individual (nine times out of ten it is the right one) turns round, believing/suspecting/knowing that it is for him, i.e., recognizing that 'it really is he' who is meant by the hailing. But in reality these things happen without any succession. The existence of ideology and the hailing or interpellation of individuals as subjects are one and the same thing" (Althusser 1971, translated from French by Ben Brewster).

Law, becoming a body that Law may attach to, and *appear* to evoke/address" (khanna 2010, p. 136, emphasis in original). By recovering Section 377 from the annals of an unwiedly Penal Code, and making this provision of law the scapegoat of a major problem of our time, as an iconic flashpoint for all other day-to-day problems that queer people face, "*we become Subjects in order to evoke the Law*...ironically, we do this in order to obviate the power of that Law to evoke us as Subjects" (khanna 2010, p. 136, emphasis mine). In other words, we know how law works, so we use it by temporarily taking the face that it knows best, of a representable community of people with points of similarity and with a shared injury, that is, discursively speaking, a recognisable LGBT minority.

akshay—himself a trained lawyer from the National Law School of India University in Benguluru which has been a substantial trigger point of queer legal activism in India for more than a decade now, and whose students have gone on to become editors of queer activist anthologies, writers of much critical non-fiction on queer debates in India or lawyers in the High Court case against Section 377—delves into the debates among the activists, lawyers and NGOs that went in drafting the petitions that finally won the Delhi verdict, debates that are the unmistakable evidence of the conscious performance of a specific version and discourse of citizen-subjecthood by these real-time actors when they came face-to-face with the law. This taking over of faces—as a discrete minority, as having distinct sexualities—did not mean that outside the law courts, that outside the legal register, the same face necessarily persisted or to the same effect, ultimately marking the complicated praxis of sexuality. In fact, as I shall read them, these debates of the activists, lawyers and other actors make explicit the doubleness of sexuality in marking the gaps between how sexuality is formally proposed to be in law, epidemiology or psychoanalysis and how it is actually lived out.

This sort of restaging of Althusser's scene has immense

theoretical and political consequences. In this book, it helps me open up the actual, broader provenance of sexuality and explain how it works in real time. The main conceit in this restaging, after all, is the opening up of a gap between how sexuality is formally projected and how those projections are complicated in the real time of debates, and affects the everyday lives of the actors involved. To be able to speak of activists' performance in relation to law relies on a form of knowledge that works with doubleness, works with knowing that while sexuality is being declared or proudly adopted in a certain sphere, those declarations and adoptions do not exhaust all the spheres of the actors of that sexuality. That there will always be some irreducible distance between the activists' role in relation to law and their role outside this relation, between a strategic decision to use identity and rights frameworks on grounds of urgency and recognisability, and the possibility of a longer, simultaneous politics that puts those very frameworks into constant crisis. This political moment, articulated by akshay, I argue, is indicative of what I call doubleness where something is used in principle but never really adopted monolithically in practice. Only through the idea of doubleness can we understand sexuality and sexual identity, not always within the terms of some deep-seated psychic truth, not always as an autobiographical reference that knows you inside out, not as a universal given, or as a totalisable minority, but instead as a series of deployments within particular spatio-temporal fields. akshay acknowledges this in the titular conceit of his work, which is refraction, proposing a model of political-sexual subjectivity where the subject is always necessarily refracted. Where it always finds place and meaning, not once and for all like it appears to in court documents, clinical diagnoses or in political banners, but instead in the everyday ebb and flow of what I have termed the doubleness of sexuality.

In this book, I want to take akshay's proposal a step further. I want to read this *refraction* substantially in the ways in which

sexuality, or sexual identity, is lived out. I want to take seriously the everyday processes and experiences of sexuality and then make these processes and experiences help us revise the usually restricted ways in which we speak of sexuality and its effects. If we take seriously the praxis of sexuality, we will realise that it does not determine the subject consistently or completely, that the concept always lends itself to many disjointings in real time and that it always leaves room for other idioms of desire to be at work, along with its own identitarian bent. In her influential article 'The Evidence of Experience', the American historian Joan Scott invokes the category of "experience" not as something that simply "confirm[s] what is already known" but also as something which "upset[s] what has been taken for granted" (Scott 1991, p. 793). She sees experience as something which does not simply give you the evidence of a particular subject-position, which does not simply consolidate it, but also as something which scatters it and complicates its meanings. Studying how the word-concept of 'gay' works in the American author Samuel Delany's memoir *The Motion of Light in Water* (1988) and how 'black' is understood in Jamaican-British theorist Stuart Hall's 'Minimal Selves' (1987), Scott reads the world of "experience" precisely to make "apparent" the "processes" of "subject-construction", where she analyses categories rather than naturalising them and makes clear that, in experience, whether in politics or literature, "a fixed order of meanings" is impossible (ibid., p. 792). It is in this capacity that I want to look at the many "experiences" of the sexuality-based subject position, a position that akshay sees the activists invoking in relation to the law, a position whose meanings and effects I see multiplying if we focus on the everyday experiences of that position. In this book I study gay and lesbian personal narratives anthologised within activist publications, and the genre of gay and lesbian literature in India, a close study of both of which unravels the provisionality and the uncertainty of the meanings of gay and lesbian as they play out

in individual lives, or in the politics and literature that seeks to speak of these lives. What I make visible in my book is not only what Scott, following Spivak, called "the assignment of subject-positions", but also the varying competence of that assignment as it pans out in experience (Scott 1991, pp. 790–91). This distinction between the solidification-in-concept and scattering-in-experience is what I call the doubleness of sexuality.

One of the ways in which akshay made sense of this doubleness of sexuality, which he would have surely encountered in his field, was to conceptually distinguish between *sexuality* and *sexualness*. A distinction that, as I argue in this book, becomes untenable once we step out of the *sublimity* of the encounter with law and epidemiology and into the field of everydayness, even into the everydayness of those encounters.[6] He uses *sexuality* as something very specific, as a "historically peculiar formulation, most strongly articulated a mere century back, where bio-medicine ascribed itself the authority to speak the 'truth' about sex and desire" (khanna 2010, p. 16).[7] He works out this meaning of sexuality as predominantly referring to an aspect of personhood, as making a person into one or the other kind, homo or hetero, based on who he desires or fucks. This is sexuality understood as having an ontological dimension, as having something central to do with what one *is*, easily lending itself to formulations such as *I am (this or that)*. akshay frequently encountered this meaning of sexuality in much of the literature he read for his thesis and in many of situations he encounters in his "field" (ibid.).

"It is in this context," he writes, introducing his important neologism, "that I use the term 'sexualness' to mark exactly its distinction from 'sexuality'" (ibid., pp. 15–16). By this he means something wider, a kind of eroticism that even as it is

[6] This untenability, I must mention, remains radically acknowledged within akshay's thesis.

[7] For more, see Katz 1990; khanna 2007; Weeks 1986; and Chapter 4 in this book.

lived out in many specific idioms has crucially not staked a strong ontological claim like sexuality has in relation to the self. In his experience of India, he says, of growing up there and in his fieldwork and the chosen stories, "the erotic and the sexual need not speak to the sense of self or the definition of the self at all—for instance, men have sex with other men, or are erotic with other men without thinking of themselves as any 'different'" (khanna 2010, p. 17). akshay is proposing a re-reading of several sexual situations as not always predominantly arranged under the major sign of sexuality-based subjecthood, but as mainly within the specific debates around idioms of *launda naach* (boy dance), *masti* (fun), *meyeli chhele* (girlish boy) or *maitri-karaar* (similar in form to a marital pact between people of the same sex), among many others, idioms that do in fact relate to the debates around sexuality-based subjecthood but are not wholly consumed by it. Sexuality becomes then, as it is in my own book, only one of the idioms among many available in modern India. "There is, in other words," he says, "a 'sexualness' that escapes the frame of sexuality—a sexualness that flows through subjects without constituting them" as one or the other kind of being (ibid.). This concept of sexualness is the bedrock concept of his thesis, and he uses it in exactly the same way as I use the more erratic and old phrase 'desire' in my own book, usually prefixed with 'same-sex' wherever situationally relevant. Desire as the erotic pull and push, as the tending towards some one or some body, as a feeling realised and lived out in such situations.

Having made this distinction between sexuality and sexualness, akshay's larger proposed thesis then is simply this: that the process of entry into the juridical register, embarked on recently by the Indian activists, made them reaffirm a form of "sequestering, the naming of the Queer body in terms of identities referring to embodiments-in-the-world, as distinct 'sexuality types', i.e., 'LGBT'" that could be presented to the state as a coherent and collective injured body in need of protection and

acceptance by it (khanna 2010, p. 250). In pursuing this large "project of citizenship", the activists and lawyers consciously framed "the question of sexualness as one of sexuality", which akshay argues, following the Slovenian philosopher Slavoj Žižek, was a "conscious misrecognition", even if it was "unavoidable" in that context (ibid.).[8]

Sexuality—that has been bio-medically and psychoanalytically imagined as an aspect of the self, a history that akshay repeatedly alludes to and that I try to work out in Chapter 4 of this book—works then as an anchor for the citizen-subject, as producing its subject effect in political situations through 'sexual identity' which sexualness did not do or was not interested in doing. akshay tells the story of sexuality as a kind of collateral payment that had to be paid by the activists in making their urgent bid to the state. Žižek frames it, and things like it, as 'unavoidable', a delusion that is the condition of our historical activity. What I want to propose is this: sexuality indeed is an ideological misrecognition but it is a misrecognition that, in all instances of its active life, is neither complete nor consistent. Since there is always an active doubleness between the theory of sexuality and its praxis, we are not wholly or always taken in by the delusion—we play a game with it, believing it and disenchanting it "at the same time".[9]

I want to argue that when we step out of the specific moments that occur in the encounter with Law, that "realm of grander [symbolic] legality", that is, when we step out of the legality of

[8] Responding in particular to the Althusserian scene of hailing, which akshay is also deeply interested in, Žižek writes that the "point is not just that we must unmask the structural mechanism which is producing the effect of subject as ideological misrecognition" (1989, p. 2). In fact, "at the same time," Žižek argues, "we must…fully acknowledge this misrecognition as unavoidable—that is, we must accept a certain delusion as a condition of our historical activity, of assuming a role as agent of the historical process" (ibid.).

[9] I use the phrase "at the same time" as denoting simultaneous temporalities in the same way as Žižek has done in the earlier quote, the intersecting and mutually qualifying times of sexuality-as-concept and of sexuality-as-praxis.

auratic documents and pronouncements and into the minituiae of law, without a capital 'L', as it is experienced in day-to-day tussles in courts, in open strategising outside it, that when we step into the law of judges, lawyers and litigants as real-time human actors with diverse motivations, then we will have to speak of not what sexuality is, as some given minoritising, totalising form, but instead of its constant contaminations in the way it is lived out, in which it is bandied about in the media, how it is used in thickly laden web-profiles, how it is twisted in emotional narrations to the counsellor, how it is used varyingly by anthologists and authors on the cover pages and within intimate personal narratives (khanna 2010, p. 118). In fact the whole methodological trend of my book is from the topos of grand symbolism of concepts, of their sublimity, to the topos of the everyday where those concepts are lived out. The latter offers different sites for the concept of sexuality, of the play inherent in its many deployments, the chaos of its many scenes rather than the watertightness of its conceptual form. It offers those instances where sexuality begins to really behave like sexualness.[10]

When I say sublime in relation to the encounter with law and epidemiology, I mean something very particular. Sublime as something grand, capable of inspiring awe. Sublime is something with an aura of importance and formalness, of being exemplary and at a distance, of being visibly set in stone, etched in gold. A judgement pronounced from the High Court bench in that moment of pronouncement, a state constitution as an iconic text, a religious scripture that commands a place of respect in a temple are all sublime in this sense. In contrast, everydayness resides in the minutiae, in the betrayal of awe, in the short-circuiting of any imposing distance and in emotional appropriation through messy narrations. It is mobilised by a far more functional and

[10] This trend also remains deeply acknowledged in akshay's thesis as I will remark later.

often street-smart ability to use but not be wholly taken over by something; it is something which accommodates and works with a kind of doubleness, always half-deluded, half-sceptical. When a judgement circulates like Chinese whispers within multiple strands of the Hindi and English media, or when it is heard by teary-eyed activists in the court room, when the state constitution is discussed threadbare, torn apart and nitpicked with in feisty public consultations, or when a scripture is quoted, mis-quoted, parcelled into byte sizes, then their respective sublimity, the grand symbolism of their concepts dissipates.[11] The encounter of the 'sexuality' activists with law, as akshay's thesis unmistakably evidences, happens on both these levels. It is made up of both awesome sublime moments and texts, and also everyday confusions, disagreements, compromises and emotions. What I am suggesting is that sexuality begins to look far more inconsistent, more unpredictable, less totalisable, that is, it begins to look a lot more like sexualness, if we look at it through the lens of a non-sublime everydayness. The three major chapters in my book, the one closely reading personal narratives included within activist anthologies, the one working out the many uses of the genre of lesbian and gay writing, and the one that works out the complexity of idioms of desire in web profiles on gay websites do exactly this. These chapters try to find the conceptual meaning of sexuality that already takes into account its everyday functions, that is, it tries to stage sexuality through its doubleness.

Fittingly, I read akshay's stories of encounters with law and epidemiology as playing out on both levels, that of sublimity and of everydayness. They are populated by the daily tussles and decisions, the frequent fights and conceptual disagreements of the many activists, NGO workers and others related with the

[11] I want to thank Gautam Bhan for suggesting a version of this idea to me, for hammering it into my resistant head.

Section 377 case. Often these stories themselves deal with "quite other [political, economic] tensions", tensions not limited to the question of sexual desire (khanna 2010, p. 251).[12] His stories are of real-time actors, always finding themselves in the middle of both premeditated and unpremeditated actions. There are so many clusters of queer bodies and emotions that belie any simpleminded and underlining "unity of these bodies" on any one count (ibid.). akshay carefully elaborates, especially in his closing words on the "cleavage on the queer body" and following French philosopher Deleuze's work on Foucault's essay 'The Order of Discourse', on the "various lights, sources of light...sometimes these, and sometimes those" that illuminate, differently at different times, what we look at, what we choose to look at, when we look at sexuality, when we look at sexualised bodies (ibid., p. 253). In his long meditation on how what is *visible*—as body, as actions, as excess—both extends and interrupts what is *articulable*—as word, as name, as science—akshay is driven by the Deleuzian conceit about the excessive frontality of all visibility, only some of which we usually choose to see, only some of which we usually select for appreciation in real time.[13]

[12] For example, an extensively funded HIV-AIDS industry, other than triggering complex adoptions of functional epidemiological categories among people, has also meant "regular employment in NGOs, the creation of networks of support and services, and the inauguration of a realm of respectability for hitherto despised [queer] folk" (khanna 2010, p. 41).

[13] "Visibilities are not forms of objects, nor even forms that would show up under light, but rather forms of luminosity which are created by light itself and allow a thing or object to exist only as a flash, sparkle or shimmer...if, in their turn, visibilities are never hidden, they are none the less not immediately seen or visible. They are even invisible as long as we consider only objects, things, or perceptible qualities, and not the conditions which open them up. And if these close-up again afterwards, visibilities become hazy or blurred to the point where 'self-evident' phenomena cannot be grasped by another age...a first light opens up things and brings forth visibilities as flashes and shimmering, which are the 'second light'" (Deleuze 1988, pp. 45–49, quoted in khanna 2010, pp. 229, 241).

akshay seems to be asking a series of connected questions that could be framed thus: what do you see when you look at a homosexual?[14] What are you ready to see when you look at what you call a homosexual? What does the concept of the homosexual make you see specifically in all that can be seen 'at the same time'? In short, what is so *remarkable* about the homosexual? To this series I add my question: having once seen a homosexual, are you prepared to see different kinds of homosexuals; are you prepared then to hold on to your horses and not freeze the terms of what heterosexuality or homosexuality look like; are you ready,

[14] In 2009, for the first New Year's eve after the Delhi High Court judgement, some discotheques in Delhi decided to open the doors to 'gay couples'. Tarina Shah of Noida's high-end club Elevate said "[i]f the government has accepted, then we are all for it" (Sharma 2009). However, Delhi nightclub owners had a peculiar worry that rested on the confusing relationship between visibility and sexual identity. Anxious that straight men will pose as gay couples to gain the cheaper couple entry rather than the customary stag charges for men, Sohrab Sitaram of the nightclub Tabula Rasa said, "[w]e'll allow gay couples. But will check the *genuinity* of the couple" (ibid., emphasis mine). Tarina Shah added that "pretenders will be a problem, but we will have to use our *discretion*" (ibid., emphasis mine). "It is easy to assess," DJ Rummy Sharma of Pure-The Club Lounge said, "if they are being honest. One of the partners in a genuine gay couple is a 'king' while the other is the 'queen'. And we engage them in a conversation to check if they are faking it" (ibid.). Self-report was considered unreliable, visual proof and engaged conversation was needed for accurate verification. Of course, no newspapers reported whether these sifting attempts and their criteria met any success on the actual day at the club doors, which would have been far more interesting and an infinitely more confusing site than the rhetorical claims of the club owners. The assumption that there are distinct forms of visual recognisability for gay men as against the pretending straight men is, of course, an old sexological impulse, always complicated in actual practice. The sexologists Iwan Bloch (1872–1922) and Havelock Ellis (1859–1939), German and English respectively, used to search for female curves and lack of beards in male *homosexuals* and for enlarged clitorises and hypertrichosis in female *inverts* (Ellis 1933; Bloch 1938). Their's was the sexological world of typed bodies and catalogued behaviours, where physicality and gestures become the visual codes to map people into kinds.

all of you, finally, as you already seem to be doing in practice, to then directly acknowledge the impossibility of any closure to the definition of the homosexual? With such a close caressing analysis of visibilities and words which want to grasp them, and with the examples of a male cop D.K. Panda who dresses like Radha, the mythological female lover of the divine Krishna, and becomes socially 'remarkable' on that count, and of a female super cop Kiran Bedi who dresses 'butch', akshay proposes what he calls a "politics of ambiguity", something that I come close to in my elaboration of the idea of doubleness of sexuality as seen in personal narratives within activist publications and in the genre of gay literature.

akshay asks his readers not for "the replacement of the politics of identity" but instead to constantly see this politics in all its "various lights", which is what the idea of doubleness of sexuality makes us do (khanna 2010, p. 253). It alerts us to the diversity of experiences, motivations and contexts of people all of which constantly spill over the narrow conceptual form of sexuality, or the given names—gay or lesbian—that are taken up due to the affective appeal of sexual identity. It makes these forms and names move within the realm of the everyday which is illumined precisely by those "various lights". If we step out of conceptual hoariness and into active playfields, sexuality works ambiguously and messily.[15] With that in mind, I see promise within the terrains of a self-reflective identity politics, a politics that stages identities but is also always ready to interrogate them.

[15] akshay's remarkable work acknowledges this doubleness of sexuality—the constant friction between its theory and praxis—as something we always need to be alert to, something we need to consciously work towards. "Simply put," he says, "if there is no identity, there is no ambiguity—if a given visibility had no possible referent in the articulable, or more precisely, it had no non-normative object to be seen as, it would simply pass as unremarkable, maintaining a status-quo. In this sense, a politics of ambiguity is predicated upon a politics of identity..." (khanna 2010, p. 253).

ELEVEN FLASHPOINTS: IDIOMS OF SAME-SEX DESIRE

The Neighbourhood Wayward: अब से दसेक साल पहले तक लोग आँख मारकर कहते थे, इनके शौक़ ज़रा अलग हैं। "नवाबी शौक़", "पटरी से उतरी गाड़ी", "राह से भटका मुसाफ़िर"" जैसे जुमलों में तंज़ था लेकिन तिरस्कार या घृणा की जगह एक तरह की स्वीकार्यता भी थी। हमारे स्कूल में बदनाम मास्टर थे, हमारी गली में मटक-मटकर चलने वाले 'आंटी जी' थे, भारत की राजनीति में कई बड़ी हस्तियाँ थीं जिनकी "अलग तरह की रंगीन-मिजाज़ी" के क़िस्से मशहूर थे लेकिन धारा 377 का नाम अशोक राव कवि के अलावा ज्यादा लोगों को पता नहीं था [Around a decade or so ago, people would wink and say, "their interests are a bit different", "royal hobbies", "gone a little off-track", "lost one's path", such phrases had a brashness, but instead of insult or disgust, they also had a kind of acceptance in them. Our schools always had notorious teachers, our streets always had 'aunty*ji*'s' who used to walk campily, our Indian politics always had bigwigs whose "colourful stories of another kind of hedonism" were famous, but not many knew of the name of this Section 377 apart from (gay rights activist) Ashok Row Kavi].

— Rajesh Priyadarshi, 'गे ग्लोबलाइजेशन का जश्न' [The celebration of gay globalization'], BBC Hindi, 5 July 2009[16]

The Civil Society Homosexual: This is one programme that has tirelessly advocated for decriminalising homosexuality. In fact almost every year we convene our audience and panellists to make the case that no free society can treat what are choices between two consenting adults as some sort of crime.

— Barkha Dutt, introducing NDTV's show *We the People*'s special edition, 'Being Gay: The Parents Story', 17 April 2011

[16] All Hindi words and passages in this book, written or quoted in the Devanagiri script, are accompanied by my English translations unless otherwise mentioned. When Hindi words are transliterated using the English Roman script, they have been consistently italicised. Often Hindi quotations appear in the transliterated English form in the original. These have been retained as transliterated and are followed by my translations.

The Bhojpuri Bard: इ आज के डिमांड बा रउरा ना बुझाई / नर नर संगे, मादा मादा संगे जाई / हाई कोर्ट देले बाटे अइसन एगो फैसला / गे लो के मन बढल लेस्बियन के हौसला / भइया संगे मूंछ वाली भउजी घरे आई / इ आज के डिमांड बा रउरा ना बुझाई [O such are today's demands, you would not get it / Man goes with man, woman with woman goes / This High Court has given us such a decision / It encourages gay people, boosts lesbians' morale / Your brother now brings home a mustachioed sister-in-law / O such are today's demands, you would not get it].

— Manoj Bhawuk, Bhojpuri poem, 6 July 2009, 4 days after the Delhi High Court judgement decriminalising adult consensual same-sex relations

The Hindi-Porn Girl Next Door: चलिए शुरू करते हैं जब से जबकि मेरी योवनावस्था शुरू ही हुयी थी। और मेरा पहला सेक्सुअल अनुभव हुआ, और नेचुरली यह लेस्बियन ही था, क्योंकि अधिकतर लड़कियों के सेक्स अनुभव कि शुरुआत लेस्बियन अनुभवों से ही होती है, वैसे भी अधिकतर लड़कियों कि इतनी हिम्मत भी नहीं होती कि वो लड़के के साथ सेक्स करके अपने अनुभव कि शुरुआत कर सके...उसने मुझे मेरे कान के नीचे किस किया और मेरे शरीर को अपनी ओर खींच लिया। मैंने भी उसे किस कर दिया। शुरू शुरू में सिर्फ लिप्स ही टच हो रहे थे पर फिर फ्रेंच किस शुरू हो गया, उसने मुझे अपनी बाहों में भर रखा था और हम दोनों कि स्तन एक दूसरे से रगड़ खा रहे थे। मेरे निप्पलस भी कड़े हो गए थे उन्हें छूने कि इच्छा त्रीव हो रही थी। हम दोनों के दिल की धड़कन आसानी से सुनी जा सकती थी. मैं शर्मा भी रही थी और शर्म से लाल हुयी जा रही थी और किरण निर्भीकता से अपने काम में मस्त थी... [Come on, let's start from when my puberty set in. And when my first sexual experience happened, naturally this was lesbian, after all most of the girls' experience of sex begins with lesbian experiences, and anyway most girls do not have the courage that they go and begin their sex life by doing it with a boy...she kissed me under my ear and pulled my body towards her. I kissed her back. In the beginning only our lips were touching, but then soon, we started French kissing, she had held me in her arms and our breasts were rubbing against each others'. My nipples were hard now and my lust for

touching them was increasing. Our heartbeats could be heard easily. Somehow I was shy as well, was going red with shyness but Kiran, she was boldly carrying on this fun…].

— 'Raj Sharma', 'जूही: एक लड़की के अनछुए सेक्सुअल अनुभव-1' [Juhi: The untouched sexual experiences of a girl] on the Hindi pornographic website *Fun-Mazza-Masti* (fun-pleasure-play), 21 May 2010

The Proud LGBT: "I am always reminded of my school days in the 1960s," said 57-year-old artist Sunil Gupta as he observed the marchers [of the Delhi Queer Pride] gather at Barakhamba Road. Gupta has attended all the three Delhi parades. "It seemed it would never happen in my lifetime. What's surprising is that the rate of change has accelerated. The first year there were fewer people wearing more masks, and today there are more people in fewer masks."

— Aseem Chhabra, 'Gay, colourful and proud on Delhi's streets', on rediff, 29 November 2010

The Licentious Sorts: अरे तुझ जैसे रंडीबाज़ को कौन देता अपनी बेटी… दोनों का चाल-चलन अच्छी तरह समझ गए थे वो लोग…यारबाज़ अम्मी का रंडीबाज़ लौंडा [O who would have given their daughter to a rake like you in marriage… They had all too clearly understood the both of you…rakish son of a whorish mother].

— Iftikhar (Naseeruddin Shah) to Babban (Arshad Warsi) in *Ishqiya* (directed by Abhishek Chaubey), 2010

The Patriarchal–Political Boy Fuckers: ONLOOKER: Don't you feel that you lose your *mardangi* [masculinity] when you have homosexual relationships?

SK: *Kya bakwaas karte ho, yaar* [what rubbish are you speaking, my friend]! The only, genuine love is between two men. The love of a man for a woman is selfish. The woman is always inferior

and is willing to pretend all sorts of things in our society to get the man's attention. In our type of love there is tremendous sacrifice. I know that my boyfriends kept their watches *girvi* [mortgaged] to help me out when I was in trouble. Let a woman do that and I'll see the sun rising in the West.

ONLOOKER: You talk of boys. How can you love so many at the same time?

SK: *Bacchu, dil bada hona chahiye*... [Listen, the heart should be big...].

— 'Legalize homosexuality', interview with 'SK' who is "the president of the *Laundebaaz-I-Hind* [The Boy Fuckers of India], India's 'first' gay liberation front, recently formed in Bombay", in *Onlooker*, 1–31 August, 1977

The Medical Homosexual: I first ask the patient if he wants to continue as a homosexual. If he says "yes", then I tell him about the consequences like social pressure and stress, and I tell the parents that it's [homosexuality] not an illness, it's just an attraction. I also tell them that it doesn't exist in our diagnostic category. It has been removed from the DSM-IV [classification of mental disorders]; so homosexuality is not a "diagnosis". [But] if he doesn't want to continue with it [homosexuality], I tell him about my treatment. I personally don't treat it if it's not ego-dystonic, and because of family and societal pressure...

— 38-year-old male psychiatrist in Pune, Maharashtra, interview with Ketaki Ranade, 2009

The Offbeat Serious-Issue Lesbian: प्रीति जिंटा हमेशा कुछ हट के काम करने में विश्वास रखती हैं। ऐसे में अगर उन्हें दूसरी महिला को चाहने वाला यानी किसी लेस्बियन का रोल दे दिया जाए, तो? इस सवाल के जवाब में प्रीति अपने अंदाज में कहती हैं, "ये तो स्क्रिप्ट पर डिपेंड करेगा। मुझे देखना पड़ेगा कि इस तरह के किरदार को कहानी में किस तरह पेश किया जा रहा है... ऐसे सब्जेक्ट पर मैं किसी ऐसी-वैसी फिल्म में काम नहीं करूंगी, जिसमें मुझे एक जोकर की

तरह पेश किया जाए" [Preity Zinta always wants to do something offbeat. Keeping this in mind, if she is given a role of a woman who likes other women, i.e., of a lesbian, then? To this question, Preity replies in her own style, "This depends on the script. I will have to see how this kind of a character is being portrayed in the story…for this subject I will not work in any random film, in which I am being presented like a joker").

– 'लेस्बियन रोल से परहेज नहीं प्रीति को' [Preity will not avoid lesbian roles], *Navbharat Times*, 11 January 2007

The YouTube Buddies: [video begins] In a small crammed VCD/DVD and electronic items shop, male friends in their mid-20s, seemingly working class salesmen, are having a bit of fun with their mobile camera when no customers are around. Friend kisses Naeem's shirt, his collar, his neck; Naeem, slightly awkward, lets him, is irritated that another friend is taping all this nonsense.

Naeem [making a fist, pushing his friend away]: "*Teri ma ki choot.*" [You motherfucker]

Friend [hugging him, fondling him, being playfully crude]: "*Thodi de na yaar, kabse…*" [give me some, buddy, since when…; unclear, they struggle a bit with each other]

Naeem gets into the game. Holds his friend tight in his arms, pushes him against the VCD stacks on the shop wall, and aggressively dry humps him as a way of getting back at him. The friend enjoys it and makes mock-yelping sounds. A third man pats Naeem's moving butt, and the guy who is shooting all this on his mobile shouts "*yeh do laundebaaz*" [here are two boyfuckers]. Naeem, gives it a rest, laughs, says "*bas*" [enough], friend tries to kiss him again, he ducks. [video ends]

— 'naeem londebaz: 2 loonde bazoon ki kahani un ki apni zubani' [Naeem the boyfucker: The story of two boyfuckers in their own words], labjab1234 channel, YouTube, accessed December 2008

The Legalistic Queers: We, as concerned citizens, members of the queer community, and other human rights activists, are deeply disturbed by TV9 Telugu channel's 22nd Feb 2011 broadcast that violated the basic rights of the LGBTQI or queer community in India. Using private pictures [from a social sex networking website PlanetRomeo], hidden-camera footage, and phone conversations, this broadcast made public the identities of some gay men without their consent. This was grossly invasive, unethical and violated the basic regulations of the National Broadcasting Association. Furthermore, News9, the TV9 English news channel in Bangalore, has continued to telecast a slightly edited version even after numerous protests against this news story.

— 'Public protest against homophobic TV9 reports',
Press Release, Indian Women Press Corps, New Delhi,
28 February 2011

I wrote this book both as an LGBT activist and as someone who studies and teaches literature. As I wrote, both these roles constantly surfaced, sometimes seamlessly with each other and sometimes one questioning the assumptions and motivations of the other. As an LGBT activist based in Delhi since around 2005, I understood and spoke of same-sex desire often within the language of 'rights' and 'sexual identity'; however, in my capacity as a scholar, I also faced sites of same-sex desire that were not *in any simple way* amenable to the political and legal languages I was immersed in. What became increasingly apparent was that 'rights' and 'sexual identity' were just some of the many idioms through which same-sex desire reached language, through which it became articulable, and that there was a dizzying variety and complexity of such idioms and ways in which they related to each other.

The 11 flashpoints are a testament to the many different ways in which same-sex desire came into discourse in the worlds

surrounding me, in which it was variously configured and valued. Whereas the 'press release' from "concerned citizens...and activists" against the "homophobic" news item on TV9 attested to the entrenchment within some sections of Indian public discourse of the language of 'queer community' and 'gay men' to mark same-sex desiring people, the three buddies who uploaded their video on YouTube seemed to mark same-sex desire through another widespread idiom, that of *laundebaazi*, where that desire was projected more as a function of play and habit, rather than of 'identity' and 'community'. Whereas Rajesh Priyadarshi in writing for BBC Hindi claimed to find a wide ranging and complex social landscape for people with "अलग शौक़"/"different interests", marked varyingly by acceptance and disapproval, the English journalist Barkha Dutt, while broadcasting her "programme" for "decriminalising homosexuality" recast that very landscape as something essentially un-free and in need of serious intervention. What these different flashpoints unmistakably pointed out to me was that same-sex desire operated through many idioms, not all of which corresponded simply to the dominant frameworks and desires of LGBT activism and of law, and that these idioms were constantly interacting with each other and producing situations both of convergence and incompatibility.[17] What I was seeing in my own worlds, this simultaneous coming together and pulling apart of different idioms of same-sex desire, it turned out, had a

[17] This was largely in keeping with the immense body of scholarship which argued that post-colonial India was not subject to any smooth progress of what can be termed 'liberal' ideas and structures; instead, it was marked by many criss-crossing influences of different ideas, frameworks of thinking, persuasions and politics (see Chatterjee 2004; Menon 2010; Kaviraj 2012). These differences were often articulated along the lines of class and language but not always; for instance, Nivedita Menon, in revising the famous formulation of Partha Chatterjee's "civil society" and "political society" saw in those terms not distinct 'empirical spaces' but instead "two *styles of political engagement* that are available to people" in post-colonial India, "the former...more available to an urbanized elite, the latter to the rest" (2010, pp. 11–12, emphasis in original).

remarkable pre-history of its own. Let me give two instances of that history, one from the life of an Urdu author, another from that of a British colonial doctor.

In November of 1946, summoned for the second hearing by the courts of the colonial state on the charges of obscenity for her Urdu short story '*Lihaf*' (The Quilt), the writer Ismat Chughtai reached Lahore. It had been about four years since '*Lihaf*' had been published in the Urdu journal *Adab-e-Lateef*. It told the story of Begum Jan who is married into a rich Muslim household where she begins to find pleasure in her housemaid Rabbu's service—in her massages, in her recipes, in her touch. Narrated in the un-omniscient voice of a young girl, the story ends with a moment of radical speculation—what the young girl hears at night from the Begum's bed, what she makes of Rabbu's palpable presence there, what she sees under the Begum's quilt. None of this is directly revealed in the story but instead breathed into its air, nourishing the text with exciting inferences. It "was based on my own experience as a child," Chughtai said years later (Parivaraj 1991, p. 27). Yet '*Lihaf*', now charged in court, was already a subject of some scandal and concern in Chughtai's literary circles. She found herself explaining her motivations for writing the story to one older writer M. Aslam in Lahore. This motivation was propelled by a peculiar sort of confusion. In fact, her very confusion—in its root sense, Latin *confūsus* is to mix together—will help us understand the larger framework of the intersecting idioms of same-sex desire, wherein different ways of looking at such desire often overlap with each other. The confusion is key to this matter, to her writing the short story:

> अस्ल में असलम साहब, मुझे कभी किसी ने नहीं बताया कि "लिहाफ़' वाले मौज़ू पर लिखना गुनाह है। न मैनें किसी किताब में पढ़ा कि इस...मर्ज़...या लत के बारे में लिखना नहीं चाहिए। शायद मेरा दिमाग अब्दुररहमान चुगताई का ब्रश नहीं, एक सस्ता-सा कैमरा है; जो कुछ देखता है, खट से बटन दब जाता है और मेरा कलम मेरे हाथ में बेबस होता है [Actually Aslam Sahab, I was never told by anyone that writing on this particular subject of '*Lihaf*' was a crime. Neither did

> I read in any book that one should not write about this…illness… or…addiction. Maybe my mind is not the brush of Abdurrahman Chughtai, it is instead a cheap sort of camera, whatever it sees, it clicks, and my pen becomes helpless in my hand] (Chughtai 1998, pp. 32–33).

The ellipses are Chughtai's own, foregrounding the element of confusion, the centrality of the confusion to what she is saying. The citation is from her memoir *Kagazi Hain Pairhan*. In the middle of the 1940s, Chughtai is unable to choose a single frame for same-sex desire, for talking about the erotic relationships between women. What she does is more interesting for us. Instead of simply reconciling all that she reads and knows about "this… subject", the medical ideas around it or the social attitudes it invokes, what the university curricula or a medical journal might have to say about it, or what the neighbourhood gossip circling around it might be, instead of flattening these out, she *confuses* them and speaks of them together in a slightly halting breath. Chughtai's strategy, in her own words, is photographic. It clicks the picture, keeping all its meanings frontally available, always in a confusing proximity.

One of her idioms for same-sex desire is *marz* or illness, where desire is introduced and made recognisable within a medical frame. Her other idiom, *lat*, is a more social idiom of excessive habit, a sort of addiction that is not yet medicalisable. These two idioms brush against each other within what she says without collapsing into each other. When Chughtai uses the idea of *marz*, a medical condition, to speak of the relationship between Rabbu and Begum Jan, she is latching on to what was by then a longstanding bio-medical and psychoanalytical discourse around what came to be called 'homosexuality' which was often, if not always, posed as a particular disease or condition to be cured and its symptoms and diagnosis elaborated upon. Within this discourse, the 'homosexual' emerged as a distinct type of person with given physical and psychic markers. By the mid-1940s

when Chughtai had the heated conversation with M. Aslam, this idea already had a large provenance within European and colonial clinics, journals, courts and libraries; in fact, later in her defence with the Lahori author, Chughtai specifically refers to contemporary "नफ़सियात और डॉकटरों के कोर्स" [psychology and medical curricula].[18] The other idiom, of *lat*, that Chughtai

[18] When charged with a lack of proper religious education by M. Aslam, Chughtai gives him a short trajectory of her successive encounters with knowledge about this "subject of Lihaf". It is here that she cites a strong formal medical tradition accessible to her at the university libraries in late colonial India: 'जब बचपन में मैंने ज़्यादा किताबें पढीं तो मेरे दिल को धक्का सा लगा। वो बातें गंदी लगीं। फिर मैनें बी.ऐ. के बाद पढ़ा तो पता चला कि वो बातें गंदी नहीं, बड़ी समझ-बूझ कि बातें हैं जो हर ज़ी-होश इनसान को मालूम होनी चाहिए। वैसे लोग चाहें तो नफ़सियात और डॉकटरों के कोर्स में जो किताबें हैं उन्हें भी गंदा कह दें' [In my childhood, when I read more books about this, I was shocked. These things seemed dirty. But when I read about it after my B.A., then I came to know that these things are not obscene; they are in fact quite insightful and should be known by every reflective person. As it is, if people want they could call even those books on psychology and those in the doctors' medical curricula obscene] (Chughtai 1998, p. 33). During these B.A. days at the missionary institution Isabella Thoburn College in Lucknow, Ismat Chughtai had at her disposal a library full of literary and scientific texts from Europe and colonial India. "आई.टी. कॉलेज में कई हज़ारों किताबें थीं" [I.T. College had thousands of books] (ibid., p. 251). It is here that her head began to swirl with the clash of what seemed different and contradictory systems of knowledge, including her confusion over how to reconcile the Darwinian theory of evolution with the Islamic-Christian theory of the divine genesis—"दिमाग कलाबाज़ियाँ खाने लगा" [My head began to do acrobatics] (ibid., p. 256). Later working as a school teacher in Bareilly, Chughtai continued her ravenous and eclectic reading. She told one friend about reading a lot of Freud, where she would have surely encountered references to the word-concept of 'homosexuality'. As different ways of looking at things clashed with each other, Chughtai's reading of Freud was never blindly trusting but always critical and looking for loopholes and incompatibilities, even subjecting Freud's name to a cheeky and hilarious pun. Talking of her experience of reading Freud, she states "...मुकम्मल ईमान न ला सकी। कुछ फ्रौड भी है फ्रायड में। एक कज है मेरे ज़ेहन में। कितना भी अज़ीम ईटेलेक्चुअल हो, मैं आँख मूँदकर ईमान लाने कि कायल नहीं। न जाने क्या आदते-बद है कि सबसे पहले उनके कौल में लूपहोल तलाश करती हूँ। मुवाफ़िकत से पहली सारी मुखालिफ़त कि देख-रेख कर लेनी चाहिए...पहला लफ्ज़ मेरी ज़ुबां से शायद 'क्यूं' हि निकला होगा, हालाँकि इस क्यों ने मुझे बड़ी मार खिलाई है" [I could not bring complete faith to it. There is some fraud in Freud. My mind always has a nagging doubt. No matter how great an intellectual it is, I am never fond of giving blind trust. I don't know what sort of habit it is that first I always search

uses frames the presence and pleasures of same-sex desire in a larger, more profuse and specifically social and cultural setting, a setting not available to medicalisation in any simple way. Within this setting, *lat* expresses one's personal inclinations, one's *shauk*, whose ideas and practices have a long and contested literary-cultural history within Hindi-Urdu. To have a *lat* is understood as operating within an excessive, sometimes scandalous but always familiar bandwidth of habits or leanings. *Lat* as that thing which one is given to with various, and often interconnected, kinds of things as its objects—*lat* for food, for games, for music, for clothes and cosmetics, for prostitutes, for girls, for boys, for massage, for loafing, or even for getting into arguments. The extraordinariness of *lat*, that is to say, the variable that determines whether it is something worthy of intervention, is always unpredictable, forever contracting and expanding, and social attitudes around it can range from open indulgence to disapproval, often see-sawing from context to context. For Chughtai, her characters Begum Jan and Rabbu forever swing between having a *marz* and living in a world of *lat* without one idiom ever overtaking the other completely.

I want to speak of this moment in Chughtai's memoir as an archetype for the idea of intersecting idioms of same-sex desire elaborated in this book. That same-sex desire comes into language and practice in many different ways and these ways often form confusing constellations with each other, where the separate effects of each of the idioms are simultaneously palpable on any given site of same-sex desire. Once we study same-sex desire through the many dispersals and consolidations of its idioms, and through the significant power relationships between them, we are able to acknowledge the sheer density and richness of the ways in which such desire is understood and practiced. The American

for loopholes in their work. Before suitability we should always take stock of all the incompatibilities…may be the first word my mouth ever uttered was "why", although this "why" has landed me in a lot of trouble] (Chugtai 1998, p. 205).

queer theorist Eve Kosofky Sedgwick could be said to argue precisely for the study of the history of same-sex desire in terms of idioms when she articulated the 'Axiom 5' in her remarkable book *The Epistemology of the Closet*. "The historical search for a Great Paradigm Shift," she stated pithily in that axiom, "may obscure the present *conditions* of sexual identity" (1990, p. 44, emphasis mine). What is important for us here is that she steadfastly discounts the possibility of any "Great Paradigm Shift", in which one idiom, let's say the "sodomite", gives way entirely to another, let's say the "homosexual" (ibid.). Her argument that there is never a simple "supercession of one model and the consequent withering away of another, but instead…[there are] relations enabled by the unrationalized *coexistence of different models* during the times that they do coexist" is an intellectual precursor to my study of same-sex desire in terms of idioms (ibid., p. 47, emphasis mine). It is through the thick descriptions of these idioms, and of their specific interactions, that I will try and unpack the many ways in which same-sex desire has played out over different sites of early 20th to early 21st century India.

Of course, confusion between the idioms of same-sex desire existed much before Chughtai. Norman Chevers (1818–1886) was an English physician who, after studying medicine from Guy's Hospital in London, joined the Indian Medical Services in 1848 and went on to become the President of the Faculty of Medicine at the University of Calcutta (see D'Cruz and Miller 1964). Writing in the Preface of the third edition of his elaborate *Manual for Medical Jurisprudence for India* in 1870, he wrote that his book is not only "an elementary treatise on Medical Jurisprudence", but something far more ambitious, "*a system for India* intended to be used by those who have already mastered the science of Legal Medicine as it stands, well-nigh complete for Europe" (Chevers 1870, p. ii, emphasis mine). The section on 'Unnatural Crime' in the book is an interesting site to note, decades before Chughtai, the awkward coming together of the

idioms of same-sex desire, of the always irresolute adjustment between different ways of looking and apprehending it. Chevers cites a Dr Clemenger who had "told" him

> ...ten years ago, that, in Lahore, the catamites may be at once distinguished in the streets, by their sallow countenances and their lusterless eyes. They generally walk in pairs, hand in hand, swinging their arms. I suggested that this aspect of countenance might be the effect of intemperance in liquor or of the use in bhang or opium. He considered that it was clearly distinguishable from the traces which are left by these habits (1870, p. 706).

Here is a peculiar problem that rests on the question of whether the "catamites" on the streets of Lahore can be "distinguished" or not.[19] Two colonial doctors, one of them writing a text on medical jurisprudence, are deliberating on the recognisability of people who commit "unnatural crimes", trying to make their excess available, and amenable, to colonial medicine and law. Writing on Chevers, Anjali Arondekar saw his attempt precisely as the larger attempt of "colonial epistemology" to "turn...excess back into order" (2009, p. 11). It is easy to note that in some, though not all, respects, Chevers' confusion is a precursor to Chughtai's, invoking some similar tropes. Dr Clemenger claims that the "catamites" in Lahore are distinguishable by physical marks upon them, their "sallow countenances and their lusterless eyes" and by the peculiar arrangements of their bodies and movements noted in the observation that "they generally walk in pairs, hand in hand, swinging their arms". Though Chevers nitpicks with his colleague, he is equally seduced by the desire of finding and claiming as accurate a recognisability of these "catamites" who,

[19] The word 'catamite' is a derivative from Latin catamītus, which itself comes from the Greek mythological figure Ganumedes, who was a cup-bearer to Zeus in Olympus. He was, according to Homer, "the loveliest born of the race of mortals, and therefore the gods caught him away to themselves, to be Zeus' wine-pourer, for the sake of his beauty, so he might be among the immortals" (*Iliad*, Book XX, lines 233–35; Lattimore (tr.) 1952).

by the very virture of the fact that this conversation is being recounted within a text on medical jurisprudence, have started emerging as prototypical figures, as archetypes of people who commit "unnatural crimes", now accessible and distinguishable for jurists and doctors. Chevers has a particular confusion to resolve and this confusion exists mainly because, in his text, the idiom of 'unnatural crime' within medical-jurisprudence is trying to commensurate its needs and desires to the confusion and excess posed by these Lahori "catamites".

What if, Chevers suggests, the particular countenance and eyes are not so much the "effects" to the particularity of the "unnatural crime", but instead are more general signs of these people participating in a broader world of "intemperance in liquor or of the use in bhang or opium"? This is the world reminiscent of the idiom of *lat* that connotes a world of intemperate excess and 'bad habits', an idiom which usually comes not with the specificity desired within colonial medicine and law, but instead operates within a wider social and cultural repertoire of indulgences and "habits", within which same-sex desire also functions and where its distinguishability from other habits is at best complicated. "Habits" is a word that Dr Clemenger himself goes on to use for practices of consumption of liquor, bhang and opium and even the invocation of the concept of the 'catamite' here ends up iterating its larger cultural connotations unmissable in the 19th century—Ganymede, after all, was the gorgeous cup-bearer of Zeus. Notwithstanding this invocation of the world of "habits", it is almost as if the desire for particularity in the idiom available through medical jurisprudence is so intense that this particularity has to be wrenched out of the morass of confusing details and visuals available in the other idiom; those details and visuals have to be instrumentally 'ordered' to meet specific demands. Chevers' colleague rests his anxiety for particularity to some extent by claiming that the marks on the "catamites" were "*clearly distinguishable from* the traces which are left by these [other]

habits [of liquor, bhang and opium]" (emphasis mine). The passage ends with taking Clemenger's claims at face value which are then offered up as having significance for jurists who will read the book. At the end of all this, I presume, the catamites in the streets of Lahore carried on hand in hand, swinging their arms.[20]

[20] Even as the third edition of Chevers' book went into print simultaneously in Calcutta, Bombay and in London in 1870, in the same year, the Berlin-based psychiatrist and neurologist Carl Friedrich Otto Westphal (d. 1890) published his article 'Archiv fur Neurologie'. This article was referred to by Foucault, in what Eve K. Sedgwick called an "act of polemical bravado" (1990, p. 44), where he cited it as the first iconic moment for the birth of the idea of the homosexual. "We must not forget," he wrote, "that the psychological, psychiatric, medical category of homosexuality was constituted from the moment it was characterized—Westphal's famous article of 1870 on "contrary sexual sensations" can stand as its date of birth—less by a type of sexual relations than by a certain quality of sexual sensibility, a certain way of inverting the masculine and feminine in oneself. Homosexuality appeared," he continued, "as one of the forms of sexuality when it was transposed from the practice of sodomy onto a kind of interior androgyny, a hermaphrodism of the soul" (Foucault 1978, p. 43). Foucault's famous formulation in *The Will to Knowledge* claimed that the "sodomite had been a temporary aberration; the homosexual was now a species", where he located the birth of this figure and idea of the homosexual within the larger apparatuses of 'modern' institutions of government, medicine, law and religion, and their passionate, almost fanatical will to knowledge (Foucault 1978). The example of the discussion and production of knowledge between Chevers and Clemenger in mid-19th century colonial India can be seen as a site where the status of the catamite is being figured between competing idioms of juridically constituted crime, excessive habits and classical Greek pederasty. This suggests a far more complicated landscape for the Foucouldian sodomite, the 'temporariness' of whose "aberration" clearly spilled over law and that particular act of sodomy, and was rich enough to stage larger anxieties among jurists and doctors of the mid-19th century about the figure's physical identification, about its particularisation through a diachronic form of embodiment. Although it does not seem that the Lahori "catamites" have been granted "an interior androgyny [or] a hermaphroditism of the soul" by Clemenger and Chevers, grounds for it seem to be being laid, just like the contemporary European and colonial sexologists laid the grounds of the interiorisation (or the psychologisation) of the concept of 'homosexuality' or 'sexual inversion' by already giving it a distinct body and

In this example, we can see how an idiom of "unnatural crime" or "unnatural conduct" within a profuse "colonial scientism" and in its many branches of law and medicine, awkwardly tries to make sense of the "excess" of another idiom (Arondekar 2009, p. 11). Copies of Chevers' manual, Chevers claimed, were to be "found in Magistrates' and Judges' offices, and in a few Indian libraries", even as he was sending out the third edition in 1870 for greater "publicity" (1870, p. ii). Wherever Chevers' manual went, wherever books and institutional impulses and conceptual frameworks like his went, there went the peculiar constellation of idioms of same-sex desire that are invoked and attempted to be resolved in this book, even as such attempts never fully succeed. I want to argue that in relation to the specific 20th and early 21st century texts, genres and vocabularies of identity politics that I study in my book, the presence of such constellations of idioms of same-sex desire, and the intricate power-laden relationships between them, persist without a doubt and without any easy resolution or 'supercession' of one idiom over another. The analytical task for me then is to highlight the coexistence of these idioms, specify their rich contexts and point out the modes through which they interact with each other. I will end this section on the framework of idioms of same-sex desire with three examples that are more recent and which unmistakably evidence the persistence of this constellatory nature of idioms of same-sex desire well into the contemporary. These are a close reading of Maya Sharma's recent book on "being lesbian in unprivileged India", the complex nature of communities and identities invoked within Indian NGOs working in the realm of HIV-AIDS, and a Hindi online pornographic story *Sajan Chale Sasural*.

movements in space. There is a very deliberate attempt in Chevers and Clemenger to give the "catamites" defined physical features, a certain comportment of body and charaterisitic movements, something that the late 19th century sexologists also elaborated upon and, as I argue in chapter 4 of this book, the disciplines of psychology and psychoanalysis interiorised.

In a personal conversation, the feminist and lesbian activist Maya Sharma based in Baroda told me that in the early 2000s, as she went about speaking to various working class women to collect stories for what ultimately became her book *Loving Women: Being Lesbian in Unprivileged India* (2006), most—though not all—women she spoke to spoke of their relationships with other women through the resonant idiom of friendship.[21] "*Zyadatar saheli tha, ki ye meri saheli hai*," she told me [mostly, it was *saheli*, that she is my *saheli*]. In introducing the book, she had given an expanded terrain of this rich trope of friendship through which women made sense of their relationships with each other—"[m]ost often the same-sex partners referred to each other as *dost*, *saheli*, *sathin*, *sakhi*", all of which words congregate to make a highly resonant and fleshy idiom of female friendship.[22] Sharma's book, however, both in the processes of its making and in its final published form, stages a complex constellation of idioms of same-sex desire, a scene of their many interactions. The book took shape and was "catalysed" by "the ongoing dialogue with women's groups regarding the issue of *lesbian rights*" which motivated Sharma and her colleagues to "take up work that would...*render lesbians visible*" (Sharma 2006,

[21] December 2015, personal conversation.

[22] Even as Sharma stated that "[m]ost of our subjects did not speak English and were equally unfamiliar with the words 'lesbian' and 'sanglaingik' [Hindi for 'same-sex']", the narratives she includes tell us that there were of course exceptions to this. One of the women she spoke to, Juhi, tells Sharma that "[a]ll my daughters are lesbians. Oh yes! I know the word 'lesbian'. So do my daughters...If Chotu [one of her daughters] is asked directly, she says she is a lesbian because she loves women. I fully support my daughters' choice. It is better and far wiser to be this way than to marry men" (2006, pp. 33–34, 171). Earlier, speaking about "[m]y Chotu", Juhi tells Sharma that she "is special, I tell you, so special...She wears only boys' clothes. The only time she wears a skirt is when she goes to school in her school uniform. People often think that she is a boy. She looks like a boy, you will meet her when she comes from school...then you will understand what I mean" (ibid., p. 171).

p. 16, emphasis mine). In a book such as Sharma's, and in the very ways it came to be, we can see the wider social and cultural idiom of female friendship, which has both buoyant possibilities and maddening limitations, interacting with a more politicised and minoritisable idiom of "lesbian" that openly seeks to "forge a" lesbian "public" (Dave 2012, p. 15). In the book there are both those who don't know the word 'lesbian' and those who, through their interactions with Maya and her team, find new languages and expressions trembling on their lips, sometimes hesistantly, sometimes hopefully; "[w]hat I really wanted to tell you when we met the first time", one of her respondents Shobha tells her, "is that I have often been attracted to women but it is only after meeting Meeta, Manjula and now you, that I can actually utter these words. There is a woman...[who] has bewitched me" (Sharma 2006, p. 121). Sharma's book "project" then became an intricate landscape on which many interactions of different idioms, different words and ways of thinking about same-sex desire took place (ibid., p. 5).

One of the important analytical moves of the study of same-sex desire in terms of idioms is that it systematically disprivileges the question of authenticity—one idiom is not more authentic than the other, one idiom does not have a greater national, cultural or social truth ingrained in it. Instead what is highlighted are the ways in which these idioms coexist and forge many kinds of relations with each other, ways in which they sometimes mark their dissimilarity and sometimes leak into each other. Naisargi Dave in her recent book *Queer Activism in India* takes a cue from Kath Weston's study of "early lesbian and gay anthropology" in the west and cautions against searching only for cultural difference when looking at "non-Western sexualities", a search that ends up making those anthropologists often claim an absolute non-application of allegedly western concepts of 'lesbian' and 'gay' identities or 'homosexuality' when they investigate the non-activist sexualities in the non-west (Dave 2012). Instead,

when we look at sites of same-sex desire in India through the lens of idioms, we can see that '*saheli*' is not so much an outright cultural alterity to 'lesbian', or that '*laundebaaz*' is not so much an absolute difference to 'gay', that these idioms operate in often unpredictable relations to each other, relations that we ought to highlight. As Maya Sharma went about speaking to the many working class women for her book, new and hitherto unfamiliar words were spoken, old words were invoked and transformed, questions were asked and transactions of affect and vocabularies were made, in which the so-called difference of the 'different' ways of looking at same-sex desire both heightened but also dissolved. Sharma's book outlines this complicated landscape:

> Most of our subjects had not heard of the word "lesbian" and asked what language the word came from. They were uncomfortable with and unaccustomed to naming themselves, and resisted affiliating with an unknown identity category that was also a sexual practice. It was a new word. In many ways it reminded us of a time when we had begun to come out to ourselves, and amongst out friends had begun to name, affiliate, identify as lesbians. This utterance changed our perceptions of self and society, and also functioned as an act of claiming. It became imperative to assert our identity within the women's movement and assert that we too were valid political subjects entitled to rights, freedoms, protections, benefits (Sharma 2006, pp. 4–5).

Sharma's passage is interesting precisely because it focuses on moments when questions are put forth, when discomfort is articulated, when new words and idioms are invoked, when the so-called 'customary' ways of doing and seeing things are temporarily put in crisis. Here, even though it might appear that Sharma is simply relegating her working class same-sex desiring subjects to an earlier stage of what she herself had gone through, as if all their experiences are rites of passage to reach a political understanding like her own, as if the '*saheli*' only exists as an earlier stage of 'lesbian', I suggest that a reading such as that would

not be an accurate or a sympathetic assessment of the complex interactions and affects that Sharma and her subjects enter into. This is because in most of the book what she actually outlines is precisely the richness and density of the idiom of friendship among women, even as she "consciously" mobilises that richness under the sign of 'lesbianness' on the cover page of her book for political purposes; "[w]hen we use the word 'lesbian', *we do so consciously as activists* involved in the struggle for human rights" (Sharma 2006, p. 5, emphasis mine). During our conversation, Sharma invoked a universe where the idiom of female friendship is rich and layered, had both possibilities and limits, and did not simply exist as that absolute vaccum that other idioms fill:

> *...aur chahe wo english wala* "i love you" *na bhi kahein, to hindi mein jo baat cheet ho rahi hai, uske laye, uske ras, se pata chal jata hai, ki pyaar hai, us dosti mein pyaar hai, wo guudh-hindi mein nahin hai, vo bol chaal wali hindi mein hai jo istamaal ho rahi thi* [And even if they don't say the English "I love you", from the ways in which the conversations are happening in Hindi, from its tone, its rhythms, its music, it becomes apparent that there is love, that there is love in this friendship, it is not in some stodgy Hindi, but it was there in the regular everyday Hindi that was being used] (personal conversation, December 2015).

In the quote, Sharma invokes the pleasures and the music of this layered idiom of friendship, gives it flesh, makes it out to be a medium in the hands of women through which they have made sense of, found space for and spoken of their attraction and love for each other. "There was rarely an occasion," she writes, "when our query about women who loved women did not bring forth an affirmative response. Almost all of our contacts knew such women in the family, at work places, in the local community, personally or socially" (Sharma 2006, p. 6). It is the idiom of friendship that gave means and skills for these women to live with and love each other, to bring that love into personal language, and fitful public avowal, and it is the idiom that itself

becomes richer and more redolent by encompassing within it that very love. Elsewhere though, and crucially, Sharma also stages the limits of the idiom of 'friendship' which becomes one of the possible reasons that, despite that fact that she "clearly found a single category implied by the use of the word 'lesbian' restrictive, and unrepresentative of the complexities of same-sex relationships…," she nevertheless made "a conscious decision to use the word" (2006, p. 5). The idiom of friendship has odd breaking points. Sometimes, like in the story of Aasu and Guddi, friendship is seen as a form of childishness that must at some point give way to the more adult choice of marriage, that must bow out to facilitate the rites of that marriage—one of the women who lived in the same locality as Aasu and Guddi tells Sharma that if "Aasu was a true friend she would voluntarily distance herself after Guddi's marriage. Guddi should accept this" (ibid., p. 48). Elsewhere while recalling the story of Rekha and Dolly from Indore, Sharma notes the reaction of Rekha's old paternal aunt that frames friendship as a problem when it becomes "so much": "As soon as I sat down the aunt said furiously, 'I gave many warnings, that so much contact between girls is not good. How often I said, why is this Dolly always here, morning and evening! Once earlier also Dolly has run off to Dahod with another girl, our relative'" (ibid., p. 55).

Sharma's book, then, stages the idiom of lesbian as sexual identity, even as it acknowledges the limits of its representative capacity, and it evokes the rich idiom of friendship, even as it recognises its breaking points. It is perhaps for this reason that Sharma saw in the women and in their hesitation with the word 'lesbian' not some insurmountable ontological or cultural barrier, but instead an image of her own earlier hesitation, and her act of identification with them is better understood as an impulse, awkward or not, to forge a political community of women who love each other. The field of "[i]ncommensurability", like

Naisargi Dave argues in relation to the activists and non-activists she studies in her book, became for Sharma and some of her subjects, "a desired field of possibility relative to moments" in which a flat kind of commensuration might be demanded by "rules, cultural norms, or liberal political banalities" (2012, p. 17). Which is to argue, as I hope to do in this book, that highlighting the idioms of same-sex desire is not to stage some eternally 'different cultural logics' that won't ever meet; it is not to lay out an essentialist "ethnocartography, as Weston calls it, [that argues for]…the sexual alterity of cultural others" (Dave 2012, p. 15). It is not even to testify to a greater authenticity of one idiom over another, but instead it is to read texts like Sharma's for the complex arrangements of the many idioms of same-sex desire and of their everyday inter-relationships that such texts put squarely within our vision.

My second example—that of the identities and communities invoked within Indian NGOs working in the realm of HIV-AIDS of the last 25 years—offers some of the most crucial grounds where unlike idioms of same-sex desire interact. In these last two-and-a-half decades, these NGOs have dotted both cities and small towns in India and have become some of the most interesting sites of experiments between idioms, often cutting across class and language. These spaces are important not only for their work hour mandates—which operates through largely public health frameworks—but also for the after-work sense of community that forms among its members, volunteers and those who 'drop in'. Regarding the emergence of the HIV-AIDS industry in the last two decades in India, akshay khanna writes that this industry "is primarily involved in establishing ways in which…socio-economically marginalised bodies are made available for intervention, research, and clinical trials for drugs and vaccines" (2010, p. 45). He adds though that the actual processes of "establishing [the] relations of [this] availability" have, however, "simultaneously engendered social mobility for

Queer folk who are otherwise excluded from masculinist political economies" (khanna 2010). In such spaces often working class and lower middle class people, including many from the Hijra communities, come to own and operate a globally mobile language of 'rights', 'sexuality' and 'trans-sexuality', even as that sometimes bureaucratised language encounters an excess of idioms of same-sex desire in the actual field. This excess is then aimed to be mapped out, however awkwardly, into further categories and terms that can be made into sites of intervention. In doing this, the NGOs are caught in a peculiar bind where they both seek to discipline the excess of the idioms of same-sex desire as categories for their paperwork, but also find themselves deliberately producing this excess as the field that remains yet to be mapped out for intervention.

This official public health focus of the NGOs has largely tried to imagine people as a population that is then divided into distinct high risk groups in need of targeted interventions, whether Men who have Sex with Men (MSM), Commercial Sex Workers (CSWs) or Injecting Drug Users (IDUs), as each is culled out in turn from the 'general population' which they are thought to endanger.[23] This stress on formalising categories and filing people within those as evidence of intervention work and rationale for continued funding has remained at best ambivalent, with each of these categories behaving unpredictably inside and outside those official NGO registers.[24] Within the discourse produced by these

[23] In fact, it was the contradiction that the field of such work—condom distribution in cruising parks, spreading sexual health awareness among high risk groups—actually exceeded the boundaries of the Indian Penal Code which became the basis for the filing of the PIL against Section 377 in the Delhi High Court to facilitate targeted interventions with MSMs without any police hassle. For more on the history of the two petitions against Section 377 of the Indian Penal Code in the Delhi High Court, see khanna (2011).

[24] For more on this, see Cohen (2005); khanna (2009 and 2010, 'The Soft Boy and heris Hard [Epidemiological] Fact', pp. 45–84).

NGOs in India, a few categories have become dominant even as they are often made to compete with each other on grounds of their authenticity, of their competence to reflect the 'true' field of sexual practices in India (see Cohen 2005).

These categories—always unstable and dynamic in actual practice—are those of the *kothi*, understood largely as feminised males, often working class or lower middle class, who do 'male-to-male sex' and are largely 'passive'; the *panthi*, understood to be the masculine partner who is 'active'; the *double-dekker* or *do-parantha*, one who is 'versatile'; and the clunky category of MSM (Shah and Bondyopadhyay 2007, p. 17). Each of these categories embodies the attempt of the AIDS NGO discourse—however incomplete, provisional and instrumental—to map out the complex field of sexual practices in India, that did not simply yield specific sexual practices under given sexual 'identities', where sexual relations between men, for instance, was not being carried out only by self-identifying homosexual or gay men. In the early years of HIV-AIDS interventions since mainly female sex workers 'were made the scapegoats' for the spread of the disease, there was no readymade site of intervention, as far as same-sex sex between men was concerned, like there was thought to be in Reagan's United States (Dube 2015). So, in response, and always with a massive focus on keeping records, specific groupings, terms and identities were mobilised to fill up this lack. This mobilisation of categories by the NGOs—especially *kothi* and *panthi*—were claimed to be culled from 'local', vernacular idioms of same-sex desire, even as they were building on them, imagining their provenance and histories, reframing them in the process and modifying them to act as tenable categories that could be understood by the government and private funding bodies.

The communities that actually form in and around these HIV-AIDS NGOs, however, are a testament to the constant confusion and interplay between these categories. In practice, their meanings do not settle down easily and neither are the so-

called local idioms of *kothi* and *panthi* insulated from the more transnational idiom of gay and homo.[25] In fact, it was after a few visits to the Milan Centre in Delhi, run by the Naz Foundation, an NGO working on HIV-AIDS prevention, that the dynamic and constellatory nature of the idioms of same-sex desire and male effeminacy was clear. All the community workers that I met and spoke to understood and operated knowingly with a real time pliability of identities like *kothi* and *panthi*, even as they might have penned these down with bureaucratic rigidity in their registers. At other times, they used words like '*kothi*' and 'gay' seamlessly, many times interchangeably and often unselfconsciously, evidencing the everyday interaction between these idioms and their meanings and uses (see also Gupta 2005).[26]

These transactions between the idioms of *kothi* and gay, where they barter some of their meanings, are easily traced. In the year 2007, gay activist and lawyer Aditya Bondyopadhyay and writer-singer Vidya Shah, both working with Naz Foundation (India) Trust, an NGO working on HIV-AIDS and sexual health, were in the process of putting together "stories of violence and tales of hope" of the "Kothi community in India", for their

[25] It is not to be missed that the so-called localness of the idiom of *kothi* and *panthi* itself gets staged precisely within the operations and in answer to the needs of what is a vast, transnational HIV-AIDS public health discourse. "Critical ethnographic studies of globalization," Dave points out, and it is helpful for us consider it in this regard, have "moved anthropology away from…[a] same-or-different approach to identity. The new problematic, as Arjun Appadurai… characterized it, was precisely the [constant] tension between homogenization and heterogenization" (2012, p. 16).

[26] Neither is the penetrator/penetrated, *panthi/kothi* model very rigidly set. In mid-2009, when I attended one of the group meetings in the office of the Humsafar Trust, also a group working on HIV-AIDS and sexual health, in Vakola, Bombay, one community worker told all of us that on his rounds of the field, he gives information both on 'active' penetration and 'passive' reception to all people involved because he can never anticipate when they might switch, "*kab palti maar lein*".

organisation's coffee table publication. In this book, particularly in the way they told the stories, they repeatedly staged the casual mergers of these idioms and of their recognisable features. "When 18 year old Gunaseelam [from Tamil Nadu, lower middle class]," they wrote, "...*decided to come out as a Kothi*, his family and friends made him an object of ridicule. Calling him names such as 'Vadi' and 'Podi' (slang in Tamil for come and go for women). His parents noticed this and began abusing him and ill-treated him, to the extent of poisoning his food. Gunaseelam was scared, angry and decided to seek support from an MSM network" (Shah and Bondyopadhyay 2007, p. 36, emphasis mine)

Here, *kothi*, the alleged local idiom of feminisation and male-male sex within the quarter-century-old HIV-AIDS NGOs, is used breathlessly with the idea of 'coming out' which is a direct loan from the confessional frameworks of gay and lesbian identity politics, where the moment of coming out is a persuasive political and narrative trope. Bondyopadhyay and Shah had earlier stated that *kothi*s are "feminized males" who do "male-to-male sex", that they are "very much a subculture in South Asia" and that their "exclusion from the mainstream" is "deepened due to their 'different' gender identity and sexual behavior" (ibid., p. 17).[27] This "subculture in South Asia" and the "stories" of its people are seamlessly married, at least in this instance, to the affective protocols of the idiom of 'gay' and 'lesbian' identity politics and literature, whereby to *come out as kothi* now becomes possible, where kothiness assumes a deep, inner valence and affective intensity. Within such protocols, *kothi* becomes something that you always were and something that you then *decide* to come out as, something that can be understood in terms of secrecy and disclosure, closetedness and outness. Which is to say that in the way it is used here, kothiness soaks in, quite effortlessly, the

[27] For more on the history and use of the term *kothi*, see Cohen (2005); Reddy (2006); khanna (2010).

cultural history and the particular psychic aspect that the idiom of gayness connotes in relation to the self.[28] It becomes possible to say, I am *kothi*, have always been. Self-identification as *kothi* among workers and target groups of HIV-AIDS NGOs is now, of course, common. No longer simply a register entry marking sexual practice, *kothi* also works as a personal identity.

My third example revolves around a neologism that I found more than once, in many variants, in online Hindi pornography and on 'gay' dating websites in India—*gaybaazi*. This example highlights that when we study in terms of idioms, we can immediately mark the presence of something new when it happens, something evident in the gradual and spontaneous appearances of neologisms. Idioms are after all as resistant to each other as they are inviting. They have a habit of adjusting to each other, of coming near and grafting their meanings on to the other. What in Chughtai's story are only resonant ellipses, expressing both separation and nearness, can become more comfortable word formations that hold together different words and their meanings, that recruit the histories of different terms into a new one that cannot any longer be folded back into either of its precedents. *Gaybaazi* is one such neologism.

Sajan chale sasural [Hubby visits the in-laws] is an online Hindi pornographic story made possible since the 2000s—first, with the increased access to the internet through the growing number of cyber cafes in the nooks and crannies of urban India

[28] Aditya Bondyopadhyay himself lived out a particularly affective relationship with the identity of 'gay' as it was articulated among those who worked in the legal profession and knew the language of international jurisprudence and civil rights movements around 'gay rights'. During a public panel in Delhi in November 2015, Bondyopadhyay warmly recounted 'the first time' he heard Sidhartha Gautam, who was a Delhi-based gay activist working with the AIDS Bhedbhav Virodhi Andolan, confidently say in the 1990s that "I am a lawyer, and I am gay." "This told me," said Bondyopadhyay, "that if he is a lawyer and gay, I can be too", he "opened that door" for me.

and its small towns, and second, with the immanent and rapid vernacularisation of this internet where most international websites, blog sites and forums have rolled out their local language interfaces. *Sajan chale sasural* is possible in the more playful, more feral parts of the internet—not the internet of news, encyclopaedias and institutions, but the internet of rapid user comments, of bad porn, of awkwardly made Bollywood forums or joke websites. This is the casual internet, sometimes captivatingly personal, full of anonymous emotions and ideas, and at other times vapidly hateful, full of gauche sorts of jingoism and unfounded expertise on the Muslim or the woman question. It is this casualness that makes especial space for neologisms, for idioms to mix, for unscripted assemblages to take place.

Sajan chale sasural tells the story of Rizwan, a young man in Delhi. In the transliterated purple Hindi prose, he is described as "*khoobsoorat sa haseen naujawan*", who is "*...lamba, gora, mast sa jawan jo hamesha ladkiyon ke chakker mein rehta, ek do laundiya chodi to lund aur khunkhaar ho gaya, phir ek baar useey ek padosi ke saath sona pada aur subah tak usko laundeybaazi ka chaska bhi lag gaya*" [a beautiful, handsome young man...tall, fair, playful guy who was always entangled with girls, after fucking one or two of them his cock became more ravenous, then this one time he had to sleepover at his neighbour's and by the morning he got the craze of *laundebaazi* as well] (*peperonity*; accessed February 2011, emphasis mine).

Now Rizwan began arranging for boys from "here and there" and enjoying himself with them as well ("*unka bhi sukh bhogne laga*"). Meanwhile marriage beckoned. Observing his cock's "solid erection" on seeing the photo of the girl in question, he said yes to the match. The match, of course, was not premised on her sexiness alone—"[*j*]*is ladki se uski shadi lagi thi wo kafi acchey badey ghar ki thi, uske* father 5 *saal se* Dubai *mein thay aur unke saath uske do bhai bhi wahin thay is liye paise ka tension nahin tha,*" [The girl with whom his marriage was being considered,

she was from a well-to-do family, her father had been in Dubai for about 5 years and with him were her two brothers as well, so there was no tension for money] (*peperonity*).

Rizwan was a relentless city boy. He ran an illegal restaurant that the local civic body threatened to tear down, making Rizwan live within what Ravi Sundaram has recently called the "pirate modern", a condition which, to some extent, puts the distinction between the "legal" and the "illegal" structures of the city into crisis (2010). In addition to this, Rizwan's dreams of success lie within the decade-long trend of large-scale migration to the Gulf countries—both of cheap semi-skilled labour who send money back home, the group Rizwan wants to join, and of middle-class professionals who hope to make it even bigger in the Gulf. The turning point in this porn story, however, is precisely the clash of the "pirate" city which sustains a Rizwan, with the threatning spectre of legality that invades it:

Phir ek din delhi *mein* MCD [Municipal Corporation of Delhi] *ke* bulldozer *chalne lagey* Rizwan *kafi* tension *mein tha kyunki uska* restaurant *bhi* illegal *tha. Phir ek din uska* restaurant *tootne ka* number *bhi aa gaya*, market *mein bahut bheed lagi*, *logon ne* slogans *lagaye aur aakhir jab* bulldozer *chalne lagey to* Rizwan *aur uske saathiyo ne pathraav shuru ker diya jispe* police *ne use arrest kerke muqadma chala diya* [Then one day MCD's bulldozers began to move. Rizwan became very worried because his restaurant was also illegal. Then one day, the turn for his restaurant to be demolished came, lots of people crowded the market, people began to sloganeer against the demolitions but when the bulldozers approached, Rizwan and his friends began throwing stones at them. When this happened, the police arrested him and slapped a case against him] (*peperonity*).

It is due to this protest that Rizwan reaches the jail where he immediately becomes the centre of attraction for the other inmates, young and old. It is here in the thick of the tale that the neologism spontaneously and unselfconsciously appears, becoming immanent in its messiness—"Rizwan jail *mein gaybaazi*

ke baarey mein to sun chukka tha ye pehli baar tha ki usko uska anubhav ho raha tha" [Rizwaan had heard about *gaybaazi* in the jails but this was the first time that he was experiencing it himself] (*peperonity*, emphasis mine).[29]

The idiom of *baazi* implies a world of excessive but familiar habits, forms of play or tempting addictions, variants of which we have encountered in Chughtai's '*lat*' and Chevers' feared terrain of 'habits' before. Though I expand on this idiom and its complexities in the second chapter of this book, any brief note on the Hindi-Urdu idiom of *baazi* must mention that it often indiscriminately attaches itself to both objects and people, suggesting a passionate consumption of those entities—whether in more anodyne habits, such as for kites, *patangbaaz*, or alcohol, *daarubaaz*, or in habits more ambivalently placed, that are sometimes indulged as play and sometimes made scurrilous as scandal, that is, for girls, *randibaaz*, or for boys, *laundeybaaz*. In *Sajan chale sasural*, the idiom of *baazi* and its connotations of habits and excess meets and accommodates another increasingly popular idiom in India, at least since the 1990s' media explosion, that of 'gay', a word-concept marking sexual identity. Within

29 In the rest of the story, Rizwan's family members borrow some money from the girl's family and somehow end his court case and get him released. On the wedding night, Rizwan discovers that his father-in-law and brother-in-law were the same two men who had been fucking him in the jail all this time. The Dubai story had been a hoax; only one of his wife's brothers was working there. The whereabouts of the other two had been kept a secret. Rizwan goes ahead with the marriage nonetheless. In the coming days, the father and the brother turn up at his restaurant frequently and get to fuck him in its back room. Rizwan takes out his emasculated rage on the girl. Other 'Hindi gay stories' on the website include titles like 'Train *mein chudai*' [Train Fuck], '*Bhai se mulakaat*' [Meeting with the brother], 'Dilli *mein shubh arambh*' [A Good Start in Delhi], 'Factory *mein dhoom* 1' [Fun in the Factory 1], 'Office *mein marvaai*' [Fucked in the Office], '*Padosi ladka*' [Neighbourhood Boy], 'Parlour *ka gaandu*' [Faggot in the Parlour], 'School *mein naya ladka*' [New Boy in the School], '*Naai ne gaand maari*' [Barber Fucks the Ass], etc.

the idiom of gayness, same-sex desire is posited not so much as a habit that one has, which can or cannot be given up, which is or is not 'excessive', but instead, it is an inner quality that one expresses and that one is somehow marked by. In the neologism *gaybaazi*, these two idioms form a constellation.

Within the neologism, the 'gay' of 'gay rights' and 'gay pride', of 'gay men' and 'gay fashion', endlessly syndicated in Indian media and film mainly since the 1990s, and working across Hindi-Urdu and English, meets the longstanding register of *baazi* that has an extensive and contested history within north Indian Hindi-Urdu. 'Gay' is where the desire for the same sex has come to be historically framed as a matter of deeply political and personal identity, where what you love has come to mean something central for who you are, something to be proud of, and something around which a marked community can cluster. In the neologism, these deep identitarian strands mix with and get clumsily placed with the ideas of habit, play and excess denoted by *baazi*. *Gaybaazi*—the habit for gay things, playing about with being gay, having a lot of gay sex—offsets the strong autobiographical and community-oriented impulse in the concept of gay, whereby it tries to mark the self and those who are like yourself. Instead, within *gaybaazi*, gay is injected into a long, messy history of a largely non-medicalised register of excess, which is marked by a signature of play and indulgence—to varied degrees of disapproval—in one's inclinations.[30] Rizwan's tale is

[30] Interestingly, it can also be said that within *gaybaazi*, the idiom of gay is, to some extent, also made to invoke its two older meanings. One, where it marked someone as broadly light-hearted, carefree, joyful, as characterised by and disposed to mirth, as someone exuberantly cheerful, such as in phrases like 'gay abandon' or in the way the Indian English writer R. K. Narayan invokes it in his 1938 novel *The Dark Room*, "He expressed *his gay mood* by tying a preposterous turban round his head" (p. 32, emphasis mine). Second, and more specifically, the idiom of gay in this neologism is made to cough up one of its major and oldest connotations, popular at least since the 17th century well

one out of countless instances of the coming together of idioms. This book sets out to outline these constellations of idioms and work out their dynamic inter-relationships.

NIGAH IN DELHI SEXUALITY POLITICS OR DISJOINTING AS METHOD

In or about the beginning of 2011, Nigah, a small 'queer collective' in Delhi, found itself in the middle of a crisis of self-definition. Building up quickly on the heels of the July 2009 Delhi High Court judgement, which decriminalised adult consensual same-sex relations, this crisis of definition was a response to the supposed changed climate of queer spaces in the post-judgement city.[31] The alleged watershedness of this legal order and its visible fallout in the city had triggered a revision in the group's politics. This revision was framed precisely as a call for disjointing, trying to figure out what *different* role the group could play from other newly available spaces in the city, and how it could update itself to its new found situation.

Nigah was a collective started by a "couple of" like-minded middle or upper middle class people who "met through random

into the 20th and which in some sense marked its later strong association with same-sex desire, this meaning of 'gay' implied, like the *Oxford English Dictionary* specifies, "persons…dedicated to social pleasures; dissolute, promiscuous; frivolous, hedonistic…uninhibited; wild, crazy; flamboyant". In 1849, Thomas Babington Macaulay, the infamous author of the Indian Penal Code, uses the word in this sense—"From some pavilions were heard the noises of drunken revelry, from others the curses of gamblers. In truth the place was merely *a gay suburb* of the capital" (Chapter VI, p. 103, emphasis mine). In 1851, the English journalist Henry Mayhew spoke of "The principal of…[a] firm" as someone who "*was what is termed 'gay'*. He was particularly *fond of* attending public entertainments. He *sported* a little as well, and *delighted in* horse-racing" (p. 382, emphasis mine).

[31] This judgement of the Delhi High Court was reversed by the Supreme Court on 11 December 2013.

circumstances" around 2003 in Delhi, and realised that they were interested in similar issues of "gender and sexuality" and "also had a very strong belief in the various kinds of media as a tool for social change" (Arasu c. 2005). The founding members were young, more or less in their early 20s, either in the last term of their B.A. at Lady Shri Ram College in Delhi University, or fresh returns from their undergraduate studies in the U.S., some were theatre performers and some 'worked'. Soon, there were students from the city's Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU), where they had started JNU's first queer collective Anjuman. I use the term 'founding members' loosely because Nigah was always in a sense a loose collective, never overly formalised. Internally, it mostly worked as a network of friends.

Unevenly over the rest of the decade, the group became a cluster of some permanent, several itinerant members, many of whom were students, others worked in NGOs, in embassies, in autonomous feminist groups, in corporate offices, in PR firms, as designers or photographers, or were finishing their PhDs offshore. This difference in profiles meant a regular diet of internal differences in vision and politics. "No one can make any collective space be what they want to," one of the Nigah members wrote reflecting on the group's past, "and understandably it causes frustrations, some that we can live with, some that we can't" (Deepti Sharma, personal email, 28 March 2011). It was this space of debate and friendship that I joined around July 2006 and although I left the group formally around 2012, their friendship continues to sustain me.

Slightly irregularly over this last decade, Nigah organised scores of cultural events like film screenings, queer open mics, picnics and one-off salsa workshops and play performances. Some of its members frequently went to Delhi University colleges conducting workshops on 'sexuality' and on the idea of 'intersectionality', and several in the group organised and participated in public demonstrations in the city on feminist,

queer issues, often in association with other groups and NGOs. A few of its members also played a significant role in the Delhi-based group Voices against 377 that filed its petition in the Delhi High Court, in support of the Naz Foundation petition, asking for a reading down of Section 377.[32]

Since 2009, except for a brief lull in between, Nigah has been organising an annual international queer film festival in Delhi. This was hosted in venues like the Indian Social Institute (ISI), which is a resource centre and research institution connected to several people's movement in India, specifically those around poverty, caste and agriculture; and the Max Mueller Bhavan, which is the cultural and educational wing of the German embassy in Delhi. Some of the Nigah members, in their roles outside the group, were also actively involved in issues relating to women's rights and safety in urban spaces, communalism, sexuality training in Hindi among semi-urban groups, addressing human rights violations in situations of conflict, urban poverty and displacement, and corporate accountability, all debates which they tried to flag within Nigah as well, as friends, as members not invested in the singular issue of 'sexuality', as participants of its online and offline internal discussions. It was specifically these perspectives that were to initiate and deepen the debates about self-definition post the judgement.

Over all these years, Nigah had become a meeting point, a space of friends, of friends of friends and other familiar faces which were often rhetorically given the name of 'community'. It became a rare space for them to get together, often made cheerful by the appearance of newbies or new faces in the audience, some of whom expressed interest in joining. What the group members felt was that "[w]hen Nigah began, it was one of the few available spaces, that was not an AIDS-based or a women's rights NGO

[32] For more on Voices against 377 and on the important debates that went in the drafting of its petition, see khanna (2010, pp. 118–42).

with its rules and procedures, neither a support or counselling group with its specific formats, nor a collective geared specifically towards the legal fight against the anti-sodomy law" (Arasu 2011). It was instead a casual space for queer people—mostly English speaking, largely upper caste and middle class—that mixed and matched between more 'political' events and informal, cultural ones which it saw *as* political. This space, in that sense, also worked as a space of leisure, its events were also sites of flirtation and banter, its after-event drinks and dinner sessions among the members and their friends were as much part of the Nigah ritual as the organised event itself. Looking back at the decade, one member understood the group as being "incredibly political in a way that the politics do not weigh you down…allows for lightness to exist, understands contradictions, lets you breathe" (Deepti Sharma, personal email, 28 March 2011).

However, as some members pointed out, this "lightness" of Nigah was "both its strength and what it will always struggle with"; "it's the push and pull that I love about it as a space even when its [*sic*] infuriating me" (Gautam Bhan, personal email, 28 March 2011). There were substantial contradictions between political vision and practice for several in the group. One was the almost consistent use of English and the other was the more or less familiar bandwidth of the largely middle class, upper caste audience it was catering to over the years; "Queer Fest is talking," one member suggested during the discussions over self-definition, "to the same two degrees of who we know, it either needs to change in terms of who we talk to, or what we talk about" (Pavitr Rastogi paraphrased in Gautam Bhan, personal email, 19 February 2011). In this bid, Nigah had started translating some of its publicity material into Hindi only towards the end of the decade, when not doing so seemed politically untenable. These debates often came up in its meetings as things to be seriously worked upon, especially after the judgement. There were fears that the group was sticking to its comfort zones. In these discussions, a

member pointed out that "we need to take that big move. For all events in English, we need events in Hindi. It's easier to do the English events. We need parity of number of events—but this is a drastic change, it's not just add one Hindi event types [*sic*]" (Arasu paraphrased in Gautam Bhan, personal email, 19 February 2011). Discussions like this were also triggered by the general feedback about the unapproachability of the group. After some of its events, and particularly after the first film festival, the group often received emails that it appeared to be too "closed-off" to outsiders, that it was difficult to figure out how to become part of it, that it was too "clique-y" and "elite". These were not allegations that the group could deny but had to use as points of self-reflection.

These debates spiralled particularly after the High Court judgement. From 'one of the few available spaces', Nigah now found itself amidst a matrix of spaces that were doing the similar thing, that were geared towards creating 'gay' and 'lesbian' spaces, mostly the former, but of a different make-up and guided by different political imaginations. Nigah found that its job had been partially outsourced and to some degree reinvented. It found itself in the middle of an over-enthusiastic English and often Hindi print and television media that were now regularly soliciting comments from 'Delhi's gay and lesbian community' about some film, some protest and which always came in large numbers during annual Pride marches; at the time of writing, Delhi has had eight Prides.[33] Especially since the High Court judgement

[33] The annual Delhi Queer Pride marches are noticeably attended both by the English-speaking middle and upper classes and by the more mixed groups that have come to consolidate around HIV-AIDS NGOs and speak a confident vernacular. These marches, not unlike their recent counterparts in other Indian cities, become sites of a clumsy, passing proximity of classes and languages and consequently of the idioms of same-sex desire. A text cloud of slogans on banners used during the eight years of the Delhi Queer Pride would include: 'Greedy Bisexual', 'Happy Homo', 'Stop Oppression of Transgenders', 'Delhi Be

on 377 and the NALSA v. UoI Supreme Court judgement on transgender rights, and now even beyond the reversal of the 377 judgement by the apex court, the media is now no longer unhappy to pitch stories about the progress of the legal case against the anti-sodomy law, do features on gay and lesbian relationships and love, and write 'sympathetic' stories about the 'third gender'. Some fortnightly English magazines like *Time Out* had regular stories

Proud', 'Proud Indian Lesbian', 'Love knows no Gender', 'Yes to Gay Rights', '*Dilli Ko Satrangi Salaam*' [A Rainbow Salute to Delhi], 'Proud to be Bisexual', 'Queer, Dalit and Proud', 'Hindu, Muslim, Sikh, Isaai, Hetero-Homo *Bhai Bhai*' [Like Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs and Christians, Heteros, Homos are Brothers], 'Keep your laws off my body', 'Queer *Dilli Meri Jaan*' [Queer Delhi My Life], '*Ham Hain Rahi Pyaar Ke, Hamse Kuch Na Boliye*' [We Are Travellers On The Path Of Love, Don't Tell Us Anything], 'Dalit, Queer and Proud', 'Give Me Support, I Want To Take Off My Mask', 'Gay ≠ Freak','Straight But Not Narrow', '*Pyar To Pyar Hota Hai*' [Love is Love After All],'No Need For Homophobia, Lesbian Suicides, Forced Marriages', '*Ham Dilli Ke Dilwale*' [We the Hearty of Delhi], 'Born Gay, Follow the Ray, Born Straight, Refuse to Hate', 'My Hero is Homo', 'Boys will Be With Boys', 'Out Is In', 'Out Of The Closet And Into The Streets', 'I Am Proud To Say My Grandson Is Gay', 'Drop 377', 'Loving Isn't A Crime', 'Don't Criminalise Love', 'Gay by Nature, Proud by Choice', 'Delhi Queer', 'Gay and Proud of it', 'Queer and Loving it'. The first Delhi Queer Pride, 29 June 2008 was simultaneously translated, spoken about and publicised as 'Dilli Samlaingik aur Transgender Garv Utsav'. *Garv* implies pride. *Samlaingik* comes from the Sanskrit prefix *sam-* implying same (homo- is the combining form of Greek for 'same') and *laingik* is a derivation from Hindi *ling*. Here *ling* is used to denote the gender of the person, male or female; it works as a part of the Hindi grammar system, *stri-ling* (female gender), *pu-ling* (male gender) and *napunsak-ling* (closest in sense to neuter, but outside grammar, also a term of invective for those who are effeminate or for Hijras). *Samlaingik* was an attempt of liberal activists and sexual health NGOs since the mid-to-late 1990s to create the Hindi equivalent of the term 'homosexual'. It is now very common in popular Hindi print and visual news media. In the same vein, Sangini (India) trust, a Delhi-based non-profit organisation working on women's sexual and reproductive rights, produced its *Guide To Your Rights: Legal Handbook For Sexual Minorities In India* as *Hakon Ki Aur: Bharat Ke Yaunik Alapmaton Ke Liye Kanuni Sahayata Pustika* (2005).

pitched as being of 'gay and lesbian' interest, if not a permanent gay and lesbian four-page spread. In answer to the many serious efforts over the last several years by trans* and LGB activists and friendly sections of the media, the liberal language of sexuality rights and gay, lesbian and trans* identities had more or less become common-sensical among the media circles. There were less and less aberrations in the story pitch in the metropolitan English media and large swathes of Hindi media—a pitch with a liberal bent, with secular 'progressive' reasoning and talk of 'community' and 'growing acceptance'; all this despite the stories of some excited journalism graduates that edged on the simplistic and unresearched even when they were excruciatingly sincere.

There was also a multiplication of spaces of entertainment, leisure and enjoyment, most visibly for gay men. New groups like Boyzone Delhi, Gay Delhi or Boyzrus Delhi built upon the existing and far sparser network of gay and lesbian discotheque parties, ones which had also been frequented by Nigah members. These groups took the frequency of such 'gay' parties to almost five times a week, and an unmistakably greater differentiation crept in with this expansion and bigger cover charges, of differentiation of clientele between venues, of 'upmarket' parties and those which were decidedly not so, of an everyday gentrification at the doors, of a more palpable, sometimes explicit resistance to 'drag' and 'those transgenders' at such parties, for the sake of the "comfort level" of a largely cis-gendered, upper class, upper caste crowd.[34] Groups

[34] The one palpable difference that I note is that the 'terms and conditions' of such parties organised in Delhi have gotten visibly more formalised and consistent, particularly in the post-judgement city. One typical example is from the 'Sizzling Saturday' party hosted by Boyzone Delhi: "TERMS & CONDITIONS/* ENTRY WOULD BE 'STRICTLY' FOR 'WELL DRESSED' PEOPLE ONLY. Its a request to you to be sensitive to the comfort level of others and to behave and dress up accordingly. Chapples, [*sic*] shorts and free casuals are not allowed. / *RIGHTS OF ADMISSION RESERVED. / **No sex on the premises; if found indulging in any 'hanky panky' you shall be asked to

and individuals organising such parties had enough of a catchment area of customers now to compete over what could be seen as a turf. Other online and offline groups like Symphony in Pink and Pink Delhi, which catered specifically to lesbian and bisexual women, and had more or less reached an alleged consensus on emphasising 'social and cultural events' and get-togethers over 'politics', also grew in the immediate post-judgement years and were functioning as meeting points, as spaces of leisure, and were giving a sense of community to their participants. Such groups were, in a sense, doing the same job, a part of which Nigah had always seen itself doing—of making safe spaces for gay and lesbian people to meet—although in the Nigah version this was done in a more gender-mixed crowd, and as the group liked to believe, with a particular political spin on queer sociability and its possibilities.

Nigah now found itself in a climate where *creating a safe gay and lesbian space* by itself, particularly for a middle class and English-educated audience, was no longer as difficult as it had been before, no longer as persuasive a political project as it had seemed earlier. What was indeed difficult, more than ever it seemed, was working on *the contradictions in that space, of differentiating its internal priorities*, that is, precisely a problem of disjointing in praxis. "When Nigah began, it was one of the few available spaces," one member had said; she continued to point out that "[t]oday it is part of a complex set of contexts vis-à-vis queerness in India. The challenges are many and have changed" (Arasu 2011). For her, different questions now had to take centre stage, different kinds of urban venues had to be chosen, different audiences had to be found. It was here, in the urgency of these

leave the party / **CLICKING PICTURES FROM ANY DEVICE (i.e....mobile phones, cam....etc.) IS PROHIBITED. / **PLEASE TAKE CARE OF YOUR BELONGINGS. MANAGEMENT WILL NOT BE RESPONSIBLE FOR ANY THEFT OR LOSS. / **During and after the party please DO NOT gathers [*sic*] outside the venue. The management has requested us to ensure that, in the middle of the night".

discussions, that disjointing was articulated as method. This form of disjointing had the importance of a strategy, the precision of historical detail, an eye for the changing contemporary, and the lucidity of humour; a member of the group had once joked in a meeting that "one good thing about the judgement is that *now* we do not have to bond together with those we always hated just because they are gay" (personal conversation, July 2009). One of the post-judgement phenomena was understood to be precisely this freedom to disband, of not always being together, of disjointing and diversifying one's politics, methods and goals. A freedom to form other lines of solidarity.

"For me," a member added, "the questions are who is left out of the victories of queerness that we see in our context so much more often nowadays...what does this mean in the contexts of a range of other social movements in our region?" (ibid.) She was pointing out a general climate wherein it had become progressively easier to talk about 'homosexuality' and its 'gradual acceptance' in the popular urban news and entertainment media, even easier if it is affluent, English medium and male. But precisely in this same climate, it was still quite difficult to raise other types of questions which were not simply celebratory of the legal or the legislative apparatuses of the country. Specifically those questions that brought serious scepticism to the idea of a nine-per-cent-growth-recording, rising superpower India, that questioned India's extensive military presence and laws like the Armed Forces (Special Powers) Acts (AFSPA) in Kashmir and in the North East, that interrogated the largely upper caste frameworks of power, those that under stood for causes of internal civil wars such as the 'Maoist' uprisings, not simply in the so-called perversion of dissent by violence, but instead in the neo-liberal policies of Indian governments that had increased inequality even during the years of stupendous 'growth'. These other questions began staking a stronger claim than before and disjointed the 'queer politics' of the group.

When it becomes easier to raise one kind of question over other kinds, the member seemed to point out, when it becomes easier to raise questions of homosexuality in its progressive, secular, nationalist and affluent avatar, it should always be a point of serious introspection as to why this ease is not equally distributed among the queers that come from other classes, genders, castes and political orientations, and also why this receptiveness has not been extended to other social and political mass movements that might overtly question the government or the judiciary, not simply plead with it. These questions will then really determine where sexuality activism is headed in relation with other people's movements. "Raising such questions," the same member believed, is "fortunately or unfortunately…a celebration with critique of our victories" (Arasu 2011). She found these questions slipping further away from the "everyday reality" of Nigah and to bring them back into the fold, she was certain, "requires a jolt…a jolt in what we do, how we do it, who does it" (ibid.). It requires an incisive exercise in disjointing, of doing other kinds of work within the mandate of doing queer work.

CHAPTERS

This book takes this particular impulse of disjointing as its cue and sees it as intimately related both to the idea of doubleness of sexuality and to the framework of idioms of same-sex desire. Only when the everyday praxis of 'sexuality' politics is seen as effectively unhooked from any given narrow conceptual ground, will the significant intersectional issues become part and parcel of its processes. Disjointing one's concerns, breaking them down, internally differentiating what counts as LGBT or queer work, what counts as 'doing sexuality politics', was something that the later Nigah was trying to adopt as a political method and it is something that closely informs my research methodology. It pushed me to look at sites of same-sex desire beyond the

familiar domains of identity politics and law which ultimately gave me the framework of idioms, whereby I expanded my sites and archives to look for workings of same-sex desire in hitherto unseen political, social and literary contexts, in other forms and shapes, that is, in other *idioms*, and referenced by non-English languages and often used by other classes and communities. Disjointing as method was of course broadly genealogical in its impulse, it saw the differences between forms and ideas without collapsing them into each other. It saw the interrelations of the idioms of same-sex desire without making them only into a singular sign of homosexuality. Furthermore, it defied any narrative of supercession of some idioms over others; instead, it saw an extremely differentiated landscape made up of many idioms affecting each other. The idea of the doubleness of sexuality also owed its first articulation in observing and trying to make sense of the internal frictions and debates within Nigah over its attempted political reinvention, that pushed me to substantially consider the many cleavages between sexuality as a concept and sexuality as a living breathing politics and personal practice which encounters constant uncertainties and revisions.

The first two chapters, '*Laundebaazi*: Of Habits, Politics and Modernity in North India' and 'On PlanetRomeo: Indian Men as Gay, as Lovers, as Friends', lay out some important examples of the idioms of same-sex desire and suggest some of the interrelationships between them. In the chapter on '*Laundebaazi*', I attend to the elaborate North Indian idiom of *baazi* which presents social ideas of play, habit, sociable excess and quasi-'feudal' categories of *shauk* (personal interests, likings) as effectively the places of same-sex desire. The historical bandwidth of the chapter is more or less the 20th century, culminating in this last decade, and its archives include dynamic Urdu writers like Ismat Chughtai (d. 1991), confused Hindi novelists like Pandey Beechan Sharma 'Ugra' (d. 1967), earnest Hindi poet-cum-pseudo-scientists like Ramnath Lal 'Suman', itinerant American

academics like Lawrence Cohen and Geeta Patel, and twice born literary reformers like Altaf Hussain Hali (d. 1914). Working with characters like bureaucrats' sons in Aligarh, *ghazal*-quoting teachers in Lucknow, wilful students in Calcutta, dissolute governors in Gwalior, latter-day bohemians of Bombay, dubious social reformers in Benares, murder scandals in Uttar Pradesh, and both fiery and lazy migrant poets, this chapter finds in the idiom of *baazi* a tenable and consistent patterning of male same-sex desire *as* habit, *as* play, *as* metaphors of public politics, *as* familiar and social excess. This idiom of *baazi* is also seen in its inter-relationships with a connected and simultaneous history of the idea of the homosexual in the subcontinent. This connected history can be easily sighted in the perceptual uncertainty of Hindi and Urdu writers regarding understanding this specific subject as a medical condition or an excessive habit, in the unpredictable and inventive usages of the concept of 'होमोसेक्सुअल' or 'समलिंगी' in popular and racy Hindi and Urdu literature, or in varied local responses to the works of psychoanalyst Sigmund Freud and the sexologist Havelock Ellis which were stacked in early-mid-20th century colonial libraries. This confusion between idioms evidently persisted even in more recent times, and the chapter ends with instances of this persistence of *baazi* and its interaction with the liberal, progressive idiom of sexual minorities and LGBT identities.

The third chapter subjects the current online space of a 'gay dating website', PlanetRomeo, to the method of disjointing and lays out a heady multiplicity of idioms of desire being used by its Indian users. Bringing together more than 50,000 Indian men from most regions, classes and all religions, with varying command of English and several vernaculars, this space becomes a site of the mixture of idioms of same-sex desire. People take on various avatars in their user profiles and mobilise desire in eclectic ways. The apparently stunted categories of the sign-up form—*what is your sexuality*, *what is your fetish*, *what is your*

exact penis size—are all exceeded in the thicker texts of the user profiles where each of those categories get played with, get manipulated and dispersed. What the chapter focuses on is the users' diverse self-fashionings by carefully sieving out the separate but interrelated idioms of their desire—forms by which they become legible to each other, by which they get to do what they come to do online. The three main idioms I study are that of the 'gay scene', of love and of friendship.

The rhetorical and material setting of the gay scene is the site of diverse deployments of the word-concept of gay. Here 'gay' works not so much as a durable self-definition than it does as an inconsistent gesture to participate in a group. It is something which is used to reach out to others, not only reflexively to oneself—it is in this sense that gay becomes a pragmatic idiom, an object of tactical use rather than seen only as wholesale self-reflexive adoption. The chapter follows how the relationship of individuals to the gay scene is always at best wavering. It alters over time, around financial capability, around measures of adaptability and personal interests. People are never simply part of the scene, they are either always coming in or always leaving, mostly loitering in it and using it, 'checking it out' and sometimes being forced out of it. Their crucial and always imminent separability from this rhetorical space of the gay scene also highlights that no single idiom can singularly take over people's imaginations about themselves. That a crucial room is always left open for other maneuvers, idioms and groupings.

The chapter ends with the idioms of love and friendship. The 'lover' on PlanetRomeo is more or less an eclectic cross product of the modern idea of romance and the Urdu tradition of *ishq*, notably in the *ghazal*, that now seems to live in the interstices of the idea of romance and exposes its constitutive contradictions. Romantic love—as outlined in Anthony Giddens (1993) and as modern *prem* in Sudipta Kaviraj (2006)—works with secular building blocks of what comes to be called 'mutual compatibility'. Several online

profiles on PlanetRomeo mention personal interests, statistics, life goals and desires to see if they *fit in* with someone else's. The idea of love works with expectations of novel-like narrative longevity and content, of relationships that are—PlanetRomeo users know—conflicted in realist terms, but ones that try to *work* through all the conflicts, that try to gear affection for a lifetime by mutual understanding and emotional labour. Yet romantic love also retains an almost unrealistic, sacred investment in fantastic events like the first sight, the first meeting, the expected spark, the first love, the second love, and the relentless hope that the beloved other will salvage one's life just by being around. This unrealism, this contradiction is the cue for the Urdu *ghazal*. Less pragmatic, more gushing, very non-narrative as a form which is unrealistically timeless in its yearning, it puts the realism of romantic relationships on hold to explore the more promiscuous, the more pathetic, the more inconsistent and the less careerist ways of imagining online encounters and affections.

The idiom of the friend, in its contemporary usage, is similarly unpacked to see within it live traditions that are at odds with each other. Whereas the modern idea of romance tends to cast the friend as a satellite being, valued as unerotic compared to the primary lover, the male friend as the more vernacular *dost* carries with it intimations of *masti*, play, not altogether unerotic, and emphasises friends' importance in one's circuits of life and work. This space cleared for friendship as *dosti*, however, is never in a smooth *continuum* with ideas of love and romance. It is instead marked by unpredictable interruptions between the familial and the playful, between the chummy brashness and the softer sentimentalism, the dutiful and the excessive, the friendly and the weird, and between the representable and the irresolvable. PlanetRomeo, in being a lively, chaotic home to all these different strands of friendship, love and gayness, becomes a key archive for disjointing the many idioms of same-sex desire in contemporary India.

The last two chapters, 'The Art of Personal Narratives: Sexuality and Narration in Activism' and 'The Doubleness of Gay Writing', are devoted to exploring the idea of the doublenss of sexuality. It investigates the thing called 'sexuality' by counterweighing its conceptualisations with its actual practices. Both chapters are about editorial ventures that commission writing for a specific project. Arvind Narrain and Gautam Bhan invite stories of "queer lives" for a major section of their 2005 collection on "queer politics in India", Vidya Shah and Aditya Bandyopadhyay cull out "stories of violence and tales of hope" for the 2007 book on the 'Kothi community' in India, and Hoshang Merchant invites authors to submit to "India's first collection" of "gay writing" published in 1999.

The prīcis of the argument in these chapters is simple. Whereas editorial calls are necessarily specific—using certain politically viable terms, putting strategic submission limitations, being geared towards certain funding bodies and their criteria, or highlighting particular motifs—the collections that then actually come out from the editorial hands do not as much as toe these specific lines as they become a way of counterbalancing them, even questioning them. The final content of the collections attests to the doubleness of sexuality, where it is both seen as something recognisable and definite but also supplemented with situations and narrations that make it unstable. As objects of discourse, these collections end up mobilising impulses that are quite outside the stated political mandate of the collections, their stated vocabulary, tone and dominant analytical frames as provided by the editorial introductions. There is a very necessary subplot to this argument. It is that the editors are more or less aware of the main plot. They are not in the blind of what I am calling 'doubleness', of the mismatches between the editorial call and the contributors' material. In fact, in some sense they predict it, try to clear space for it either by humility, by invitations for diversity even when it is functional, by their openness or by being

strategically, even confusingly, inconsistent in looking for what they want. The editors work with this doubleness at the heart of their collections. They are aware that life stories do not simply fit, that submissions play with and use the given 'terms' as much as they evidence them. That the category of 'life' and its many narrations are irreducible to the immediate political agenda that requires the form of life narratives and personal testimonials only as mobilisable evidences.

This personal narrative form such as in Narrain and Bhan's *Because I have a Voice*, this identitarian genre of literature such as in Merchant's *Yaraana*, are seen within their very specific material histories of feminist, civil rights and sexuality movements since the 1960s. I study these political acts of anthologisation of stories, their unique sequencing, pre-figuring and selection, not as something obvious or naturalised, but as attributable to the specific and timely editorial tasks driven by either queer politics, AIDS epidemiology or the bid to produce the first-of-its-kind collections of gay writing for a particular region. When you sieve out the contradictory strands in the submitted stories, when you nitpick with their form and inconsistencies, when you look at the multiplicity and compromises of the editorial motives, when you see the long-term self-questionings and doubts of the editors and their likes, you begin to find that this doubleness—made up of necessary cleavages between the call and the contributions—is itself a way of doing politics. It is a way of keeping the gambit of identity politics open and its self-reflexivity alive. It is as forthright and regulating as it is self-conscious, dreamy-eyed and open-ended. The short 'Conclusion' closes the book with some final notes on the political form of doubleness.

Finally, I must outline the boundaries of this book, the work that it quite clearly does not do. This book is decidedly *more* north Indian, its archives are *more* about men and its subjects are *more* cis-gendered. Studying the culture of *baazi* that has a long history in north India and analysing the experiences of 'sexuality' activism

mainly in Delhi, a site that I have participated in affectively and politically, has largely contributed to the regionally toppled focus of this work. Having said that, why these limitations do not reflect themselves in the title of the book—I could very well have subtitled this 'Idioms of *Male* Cis-Gendered Same Sex Desire in *North* India'—is also important to point out. The chapters on personal narratives, on gay networking websites and on 'gay and lesbian writing' deeply reflect the regional eclecticism of those web-spaces and anthologies, with actors often coming indiscriminately from most, if not all, regions of India. Moreover, in discussing the many idioms of same-sex desire, I have paid attention to the varying kinds of gendering in discourse and the fitful porosities between 'male', 'female' and 'trans*' is actively illustrated. Albeit my focus is primarily on men, the actors that most help me analyse even those patterns of male sexuality are often female or varyingly gendered—the chapter on *baazi*, for example, is written under the sign of Ismat Chughtai; the chapter on 'gay writing' is organised under the sign of Hoshang Merchant's gender play. It is for these reasons that even as I acknowledge the clear limitations of this work, I hesitate to consider those limitations as sites of absolute closure and instead stage them as prompts for further work and thought, both mine and others'.

2

Laundebaazi

Of Habits, Politics and Modernity in North India

If there is a growing trend to understand the colony as always having been a 'laboratory of modernity', not a simple site of exploitation, then we need to know what went into that lab experiment.[1] If we have more or less agreed on the metaphorics of experiment as adequate to the colonial experience, then we need to know all the constituents of that experiment. Not simply as pre-formed ideas that mix with each other, but as sets of influences that were already in motion and for whom the colonial experiment was another step in their movement, albeit a fierce one.

In this chapter, I focus on the experiments around same-sex desire. I focus on *one* of the major constituents of that experiment—*laundebaazi* (habit for boys, inclination to play with them). If the 'homosexual' had more or less appeared by the early 20th century on the colonial scene, residing in its university libraries and in specialised discussions among its medical, administrative and legal elite, then what were the other ways of

[1] For more on the colony as a 'laboratory of modernity', see Rabinow (1989) and Stoler (1995).

framing same-sex desire that were interacting with it (see Nandy 1995; Arondekar 2009; Legg 2012)?[2] What were the back stories of this experiment? The idea of the homosexual brought with it connotations of being a medical circumstance, a condition, even a species of sorts, and came into being in the genres of sexological self-reports (after Havelock Ellis) and case studies (after Freud). *Laundebaazi* was working in other ways. It was a social register that placed same-sex desire within the idea of habit, within a language of excess, not different in kind from opposite-sex desire but in degree, and in a continuum with other kinds of excesses like music, prostitutes, cards or alcohol. Unsurprisingly, the on-ground experiments between homosexuality and *laundebaazi* work with a measure of solubility.[3]

[2] Girindrasekhar Bose (1887–1953), the first president of the Indian Psychoanalytic Society (IPA), who corresponded with Freud for over 20 years, led a group of intellectuals, doctors, college professors, psychologists and enthusiasts in the 1920s–50s Calcutta among whom discussions of 'homosexuality', 'masturbation', 'repression', 'Oedipus complex' or 'female hysteria' were commonplace. In 1927, the bulletin of the 10th annual conference of the International Psychoanalytic Association at Innsbruck in Austria reported the activities of its sub-branch, the 6-year-old IPA that used to hold its meetings in 14 Parsibagan Lane in Calcutta, the house of its president. It said that on "February 5, 1926. The President [Girindrasekhar Bose] read a paper on the 'Genesis of Homosexuality'" at a meeting of the association in his house (*Bulletin of the International Psycho-Analytic Association* 1927). It goes on to add that "many distinguished visitors and medical men attended the meeting and took part in the discussion" (ibid.). This, it says, was apart from the "the usual Saturday evening discussions on various psycho-analytic topics" that were held at his residence (ibid.). Additionally, we should note that Calcutta University had already opened its Department of Psychology in 1915. For an excellent study of Freud in early 20th century India, and on the history of the IPA under Girindrasekhar Bose, see Nandy (1995, pp. 81–144).

[3] These experiments between *laundebaazi and* homosexuality also invoke the complex histories of the idea of homosexuality itself, particularly citing its fitful emergence in the crucial transformations within the broader idioms of vice and sodomy, idioms which instigated anxieties about moral degradation as a whole, of which same-sex sex was only a part. For instance, in his report published for

In this chapter, I first establish the general north-Indian idiom of *baazi* as bringing together social frames of habit and a familiar sort of excess. I then elaborate on *laundebaazi* not as a particular case within *baazi* (*laundebaazi* makes remarkable sense in the *not yet* of particularisation) but as being possible within its pool. I also read *laundebaazi* as an important political metaphor in critical public debates about language and governance in early 20th century India. I close with some odd and recent precipitates that result from these experiments.

BAAZI

Near the end of the first chapter of her autobiography *Kagazi Hai Pairhan*, Ismat Chughtai writes about her habit for conversations. She creates densely packed scenes with her family and friends, all of them giving themselves up to the delight of talking. "हमारा खानदान निहायत बक्कु है" [our family is exceedingly talkative] (1998, p. 18). Time seems to have a loose grasp on her joint family in

the Association for Moral and Social Hygiene on 9 June 1916, abolitionist John Cowan spoke of the segregated quarters in Rangoon and included a section on 'PROSTITUTION AND SODOMY'. Describing these army brothels as "centres of sodomy", he "went on," Stephen Legg recounts, "to dismiss the logic that dictated that [army] brothels prevented an increase in sodomy" (Legg 2012, pp. 1491–92). Instead, sodomy was seen by Cowan within a wider repertoire of dissolution, not very unlike *laundebaazi*, and access to female 'prostitutes' was not seen as something distinct from but as a sliding-scale into sodomy. Only "some special cases," Cowan relented, were exclusively into 'sodomy', acknowledging the particularisation of same-sex desire in some "special" bodies that the idea of homosexuality largely made possible. "My belief," Cowan wrote, "is that *sodomy exists side by side with prostitution*, particularly where prostitution is most rife. *It is not an alternative vice to prostitution, but a sequel to it, a stage lower, in fact the last stage in the descent of the sensual man. With the possible exception of some special cases,* men proceed through prostitution to sodomy, not from chastity to sodomy. The public brothel is *an easy stepping-stone to sodomy*, as boys are frequently kept there, or thereabouts; it is the road to sodomy, never a barrier against it" (ibid., emphases mine).

Aligarh and any chance meeting is an opportunity for endless chatter. "जब दो-चार मिल बैठते हैं तो बस होश ही नहीं रहता। चलते-फिरते, खाते-पीते बस बके जा रहे हैं" [when a few of them run into each other, they just lose track of everything. Whether walking, sleeping or eating, they keep on jabbering] (ibid.). This overwhelming passion to converse finds its high point in the scene where "एक साहब मजबूरन गुसल करते जा रहे हैं, मुबाहिसा में हिस्सा लेते जा रहे हैं। थोड़ी-थोड़ी देर बाद खिड़की से सर निकालते हैं, साबुन मलते जातें हैं और बातों का सिलसिला चलायें हुए हैं" [This one character has to have a bath but is going on and on with the debate (*mubahisa*). After every little while, he pops his head out of the window, keeps lathering himself with soap and the series of conversations go on] (ibid.).

Ashish Sahni, the Hindi editor of Chughtai's transliterated text, footnotes "मुबाहिसा" (*mubahisa*) with a word that straddles both Hindi and Urdu and is a sign of the immense contiguity of these languages: 'बहसबाज़ी' (*bahasbaazi*), that is, the fervent habit for debate (*bahas*), for indulging in argumentative conversations, for the sport of talking (ibid.). This translation brings together many of the meanings that are always implicit in the idiom of *baazi*. Sahni's use of *baazi* renders not only the specific Urdu word used by Chughtai, but her entire familial scene of conversations with all its key features of leisure, amusement, everydayness, game, excessive habit and pleasure. "मुझे हर इंसान से बात करने में मज़ा आता है...बुढ़ियों-बुड्ढों को छेड़कर उनकी मलामतें, गालियाँ सुननें में भी अजीब लुफ्त आता है" [I find pleasure in talking with everyone...even annoying the oldies and then hearing their rebukes and abuses gives me a strange sort of fun] (ibid.).

Within a few lines, Chughtai brings to work this idiom of *baazi* herself. Later in her life when Chughtai started living in Bombay, like many other Urdu/Hindi literary immigrants of her time who found in mid-20th century Bombay new lives, money and jobs writing film scripts, dialogues, screenplays and song lyrics, she found particular delight in the conversations she shared with this circuit of friends. With this immigrant literati, this very idiom of

baazi, pervasive in the entire northern Hindi/Urdu belt and the north-western subcontinent, appeared with an unusual force in the creative and production networks of early Bombay cinema and indeed on that contemporaneous celluloid. She writes about her habitual conversations with the writer Soofia Jaanisar, sister of the Aligarh Urdu poet Majaz (1909–55) and the mother of the lyricist Javed Akhtar (b. 1945), with her close friend and Urdu short story and film writer Sadat Hasan Manto (1912–55) and his wife Soofia, and with the Urdu poet Ali Sardar Jafri (1913–2000):

> सूफिया जांनिसार से तो उसकी मुख़्तसर सी ज़िन्दगी में इतनी बातें हुई की औरों से बरसों मिलकर भी न हो पायीं। मंटो से बातें करके एहसासात पर धार आ जाती थी। छः-छः, सात-सात घंटे मिनटों में गुज़र जाते थे। उसकी बीवी सूफिया भी बड़ी बातूनी औरत है। सरदार जाफ़री से कज-बहसी और जुम्लाबाज़ी [*jumlabaazi*] में मज़ा आता है। जिन लोगों ने सरदार से बात की है उन्हें अंदाजा होगा की जितनी तल्खी, तुश्री और काट उस शख्स की ज़बान में है, उतनी ही नरमी और मिठास भी...जब से बीमार हुए हैं, महफिलें कुछ बुझी-बुझी, मोहतात सी हो गयी हैं [I talked so much with Soofia Jaanisar in her brief life as I have not been able to with others despite being with them for ages. Talking with Manto always used to give such a keen edge to your feelings. Six-six, seven-seven hours used to pass by in minutes. His wife Soofia is also a very talkative woman. I have fun debating and phrase-playing ('*jumlabaazi*') with Sardar Jafri. Those who have talked with Sardar have an idea that as much bitterness, piquancy and sharpness that man's tongue might have, it has equal amounts of gentleness and sweetness...ever since he has gotten ill, these gatherings have become so dull, so lacklustre] (ibid., pp. 18–19, italics mine).

जुम्लाबाज़ी (*jumlabaazi*) is an indulgence with phrases ('जुम्ला' *jumla* is Urdu for 'phrase' or 'sentence'), playing with them, throwing them about, competing in arguments with a clever use of words and ideas. It is a form of conversation that is a heightened, fiercer version of the form, being full of witty repartees, clever reversals, literary citations and dazzling ideas. The suffix *baazi* always brings this element of play, performance and of a familiar excess to that to which it is joined.

In writing about the history of the changing forms of the Urdu poetic gatherings, the '*musha'ira*', from the late 18th to 20th

century in colonial India, C.M. Naim noted that the root sense of the older Perso-Arabic word '*musa'ara*' referred 'to a poetic contest in which two persons or groups exchange couplets back and forth, each being required, for example, to respond with a couplet beginning with the letter with which the opponent's couplet ends' (2004a, p. 108). This sense survives in the northern subcontinent in contests that were and are called *bait-bazi* [the game of couplets] (ibid.).

More than just "reading poetry before an audience" (ibid.), *bait-bazi* would have an added sense of playfulness, of an in-house match of couplets. The traces of such gaming remain in the 20th century Indian *musha'ira* when one poet tries to outdo the other in wit, poetic skill, styles of delivery and the entertainment of the audience. The competitive play continues in their efforts to find the most unusual rhymes or the most original nuances in their poetic recitations to enthrall the *mehfil*, the gathering (ibid., pp. 110–15). *Baazi* is an expressive idiom of heightening the usual, of cherishing a sociable overindulgence, of playing a game. It connotes feverishness and an extraordinary, possessive love for the prefixed object. It is a complex of habits formed by the admixture of extreme skill and a passionate attachment to this object, of poets with their couplets, for instance. In any condition, the presence of *baazi* in a particular situation or persona, divorces it from any immediate claims of moderation or of sobriety.

Baazi qualifies as an idiom because it is capable of a cluster of associations. It is a mode of expression that sets off specific relations between people and the objects in the world around them. Chughtai's autobiography repeats this idiom incessantly to frame an assortment of characters, situations and substances that were a part of her world. *Jumlabaazi* makes another appearance as something which Chughtai kept up with her *dilchasp* (interesting) friend Prithvi Singh in Bareilly where she was a school teacher (Chughtai 1998, p. 193). They pulled each other's legs in such conversations, Chughtai recalls. *Baitbaazi* is referred when

Chughtai talks of the singing contests that she used to participate in with her school and college friends (ibid., p. 198).

Later, in recounting her B.A. days in Isabella Thoburn College in Lucknow, there is a mention of *kalabaazi* (acrobatics), which Chughtai's mind performs when she fails to reconcile her classroom discussions of Darwin's theory of evolution and the Koranic/Biblical story of the genesis. *Kala* actually means 'art', or even 'skill'. Its use to signify mental somersaults in *kalabaazi* here is an expressive form in which *baazi*, itself implying 'game' or 'bet', has become a dead metaphor. "दिमाग कलाबाज़ियाँ खाने लगा," [my mind started performing acrobatics] (ibid., p. 256). The dead metaphor reappears in *chaalbaaz*, the trickster or the cunning one (*chaal* means a ploy, or a move in the game), used by Chughtai's relative, Ala Bi, to refer to the washerman who she suspects of replacing her new clothes with old ones. "बड़ा चालबाज़ है, पकड़ा नहीं जाता" [he's a skilled dodger, you can't catch him] (ibid., p. 143). Similarly *jaanbaazi*, which in its root sense refers to someone ready to sacrifice her life (*jaan*), ready to play with it, but which generally implies bravery or gallantry, is used by Chughtai to describe her own pluck in one of the more severe quarrels with her mother (ibid., p. 112).

The most active function, however, of the idiom of *baazi* is where it indicates a habit for something, a habit that could also be in surplus. It is where the habit intensely saturates some of the living worlds of the person, poised at the limits of the usual. *Baazi* as a form of habit is always elastic. It can index the more regular, prized habits, such as that of exercise (*kasratbaazi*), mugging before examinations (*rattabaazi*), little excesses in betel chewing (*paanbaazi*) or arguments (*bahasbaazi*). It can also index a range of what are ordinary but proverbially more value-laden 'bad habits' that can involve alcohol (*darubaazi*), laziness (*sustibaazi*), or devious politicking and groupism (*naarebaazi*, party*baazi*).

This idiom makes sense of the person, the *baaz*, in a mis-en-scene with a ready potential for self-indulgence and excess that could be

either fascinating or revolting or both. It plies on the category of *shauk*, Urdu word for personal inclinations, sociable cultural habits, or one's own hobbies, till it teases out of the bounds of what is deemed as mere duty. It moves beyond the mundane range of self-possession, either by extreme talent or by exceptional surrender or both. It is set off when one becomes, for that moment, zealously attached to one's own interests, either accomplishing them or giving in to them.

It should be understood that this element of excess by itself is not unusual or surprising. As an expressive form in the early-to-mid–20th century, one or another form of *baazi* attached itself very ordinarily to specific groups like poets, artists, prostitutes, landlords, bureaucrats, politicians and the *goondas*, effectively marking the distinctive scenes of their lives and work. It is of a piece with their everydayness. Chughtai's cousin Hashmat Jahan, daughter of an estranged aunt, tells her a family story about their uncle Mirza Nayeem Beg Chughtai, once the governor of Gwalior: "हाँ, वह रंगीन-मिज़ाज थे। बस शराब-कबाब और रंडीबाज़ी [*randibaazi*]। एक दिन जलसा जमा हुआ था बारहदरी में। चरांगा से बाग़ जगमगा रहा था और रंडियों के तायफे महला को गुलज़ार बनाये हुए थे... अय्याशी और नशाबाज़ी [*nashabaazi*] ने उन्हें बिलकुल मस्त कर दिया था" [yes, he had a colourful temperament. Only wine and kebabs and always with whores. One day, the gathering of friends had met in Barahdari. The whole garden was shining with lamps and the entire palace was itself like a small garden with all the harlots... debauchery and his habit of drinking always used to keep him intoxicated] (Chugtai 1998, p. 72).

Randi is more informal than 'prostitute' and cruder than 'slut'. *Nasha* is intoxication by alcohol or narcotics or both. *Baazi*, as we see here, never simply resides in a person, the *baaz*, but always makes sense in an entire setting, in a dense ambience. In other words, *baazi* works with personas. The gathering of male friends in the graceful halls, the entire garden shining with lamps and the dancing girls strewn like flowers in palaces build up the full mis-en-scene. This is the place of *baazi*. It necessarily

concatenates one form of indulgence with another and makes up a dense tapestry of dissipation, a cluster of ways of savouring 'bad' habits, of intensifying one's experience to one's ceremonial liking or to the threshold of one's artistic vocation.

The scene of *baazi* involves a mixture of innocuous habits, of self-indulgent practices and of more treacherous addictions. Its persona, the *baaz*, in the early-to-mid–20th century feeds off the contradictions between cultural practices of leisure and medical concepts of addiction, between civil parliamentary politics and extremist nationalism, between ideas of genius and failure, between 'useful' 'progressive' art and 'decadent' 'backward' scribblings and between reformist ideals of self-possession and poetic values of surrender.

In the winter of 1989 and in the following summer, when Geeta Patel (b. 1957), writer and scholar based in the United States of America, returned to Bombay to find out more details about the life and writings of the Urdu poet Miraji (1912–49), she found herself in the middle of thick conversations about 1930s/40s Bombay with the Urdu poet and scriptwriter Akhtarul Iman and his wife Sultana (Patel 2002, pp. 9–13). During the last years of his life, finding it increasingly difficult to make a living with his art, gradually abandoned by most of his friends and suffering ill health, Miraji had lived with the couple in their small house in Bandra. The scenes that Patel gleans from these conversations of the worlds of immigrant writers who were attached to film production houses in various capacities, and were friends and acquaintances of each other, is an exemplary setting of the practices and contradictions implicit in the culture of *baazi* in the early-to-mid–20th century. Sultana recalled 'a community of male poets who would come to her house to be fed, to drink, and to talk about poetry' (ibid., p. 12). She would talk and recall vivid scenes of

> ...raucous nights when people fell asleep in her living room. She talked about listening to complicated discussions of poetry and politics that would heat up into arguments fueled by drink. She

described the graphic aftermath, walking delicately between strewn bodies, cleaning up cups and vomit. She opened up for me the anxieties of a time when work and money were scarce and friends lived in her house because there was nowhere else to go (ibid.)

This is a setting where useful discussion is hard to sieve from wasteful banter, where an urban literary bohemia is at the same time forming and coming apart, where alcohol is both a soft, conventional trigger for poetic inspiration, a must for a *mehfil*, and also a hard substance of excessive abuse, and where the terms of self-possession and self-control hold at best an ambivalent value: "...उर्दू कवियों की बेहोशी भी बड़ी होशियार" [even the intoxication of the Urdu poets is very clever] (Ugra 1951, p. 21). The figure of the *baaz* could simultaneously be fêted for his genius and undermined for his 'weaknesses'. He could have fruitful arguments about politics and poetry, and also slouch half conscious in his own vomit. The performance of his habits could be readily devoured and his moments of power could be viewed in awe, even as his morals could be berated and his failures framed as general warnings. It is this fleshy idiom of *baazi*—working in an elaborate mis-en-scene, capable of copious associations, both innocuous and fatal, triggering a set of contradictory responses in its audience—whose cast includes that figure of the *laundebaaz*, he who has a habit for boys (*launde*).[4]

[4] C.M. Naim translates the *laundebaaz* generally as a 'pederast', but literally as a 'boy-player' (2004b, p. 35). Moreover, in her book *Women with Mustaches and Men without Beards* (2005), while studying the 'gender and sexual anxieties' of turn of the 19th century 'Iranian modernity', Afsaneh Najmabadi remembered the history of the figure of the *amrad* that works not very differently from the *launda* of *laundebaaz* in my discussion. Talking of early Qajar paintings and poetry in Iran, she notes that they were "populated by the hur and more commonly by the ghilman (also referred to as *amrads*...beautiful young beardless men) who often double as wine-servers...Today," she writes, and I find her discussion partially relevant to my own about *laundebaazi*, "these figures are often translated as 'boys', and *amradparasti* [or *amradbaazi*] (loving *amrads*) rendered as 'boy-love'. I refuse," Najmabadi continues, "to use this naming because of the

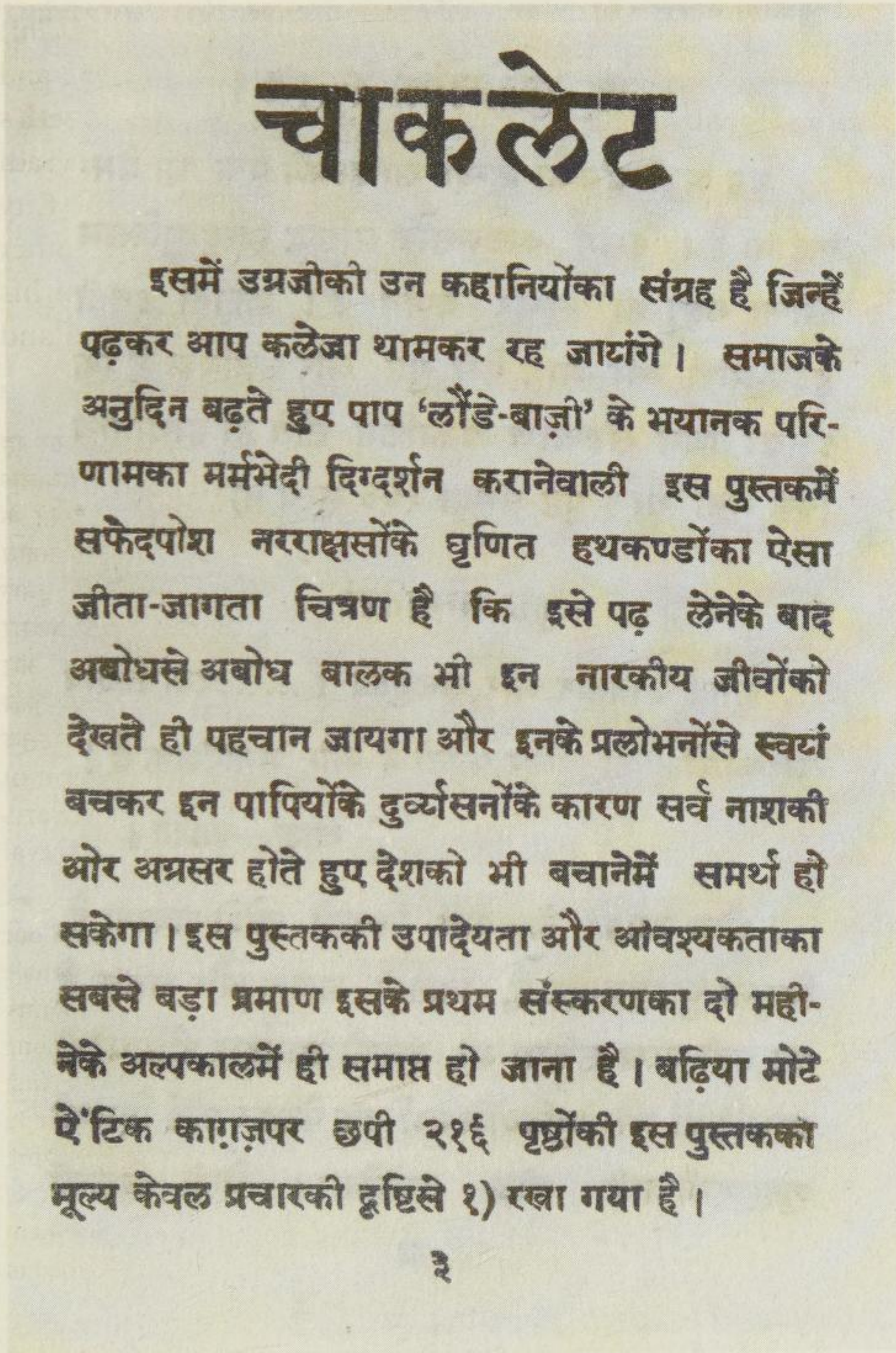
LAUNDEBAAZI

In June 1928, the third edition of the Hindi writer Pandey Bechan Sharma 'Ugra"s novel *Dilli ka Dalal* (*The Pimp of Delhi*) was published and printed under the aegis of his friend and mentor Mahadevprasad Seth. This third edition, printed at Seth's Baalkrishna Press in Calcutta and published by his Beesvee Sadi Pustakalay (Twentieth Century Bookhouse) in Mirzapur City carried advertisements and critics' recommendations for other works by Ugra. First among these was a full page blurb for his controversial collection of short stories *Chaklet*, compiled and published in 1927:

> इसमें उग्र जी की उन कहानियोंका संग्रह है जिन्हें पढ़ कर आप कलेजा थाम कर रह जायेंगे। समाजके अनुदिन बढ़ते हुए पाप "लौंडे-बाज़ी" [*launde-baazi*] के भयानक परिणाम का मर्मभेदी दिग्दर्शन करानेवाली इस पुस्तक में सफेद पोश नरराक्षसों के घ्रिणित हथकण्डों का ऐसा जीता-जागता चित्रण है की इसे पढ़ लेने के बाद अबोध से अबोध बालक भी इन नारकिय जीवों को देखते ही पहचान जायेगा और इनके प्रलोभनों से स्वयं बचकर इन पापियों के दुर्व्यसनों के कारण सर्व नाश की ओर अग्रसर होते हुए देश को भी बचाने में समर्थ हो सकेगा। इस पुस्तक की उपादेयता और आवश्यकता का सबसे बड़ा प्रमाण इसके प्रथम संस्करण का दो महीने के अल्प्काल में ही समाप्त हो जाना है। बढ़िया मोटे एंटिक कागज़ पर छपी २१६ पृष्ठों की पुस्तक का मूल्य केवल प्रचार की दृष्टि से १) रखा गया है [This is a collection of those short stories by Ugra*ji* that will make you hold your hearts while reading them. This book, which gives a stinging portrayal

close affiliation of 'boy' with contemporary implication of pedophilia and our identification of 'boy' as child. In pre-modern and early modern Persian male homoerotic culture, an amrad was more often a young male, in contemporary usage an adolescent, although he could be even in his early twenties, so long as he did not have a fully visible beard. In fact, an adolescent with the first trace of a mustache (*nawkhatt*) and before the full growth of facial hair (a process that could take a number of years) was considered the most beautiful. At the same time, that hint of a mustache (khatt) heralded the beginning of the end of his status as object of desire for adult men and his own movement into adult manhood. It signaled the beginning," as is rigorously transcribed in much Persian and Urdu verse, "of his lover's loss" (Najmabadi 2005, p. 15). Although I often use the word 'boy' in translating *launda*, I want the reader to keep Najmabadi's definitional variations in mind.

Figure 2.1
Advertisement for *Chaklet* in Ugra's *Dilli ka Dalal*, June 1928



चाकलेट

इसमें उग्रजीकी उन कहानियोंका संग्रह है जिन्हें पढ़कर आप कलेजा थामकर रह जायंगे। समाजके अनुदिन बढ़ते हुए पाप 'लौंडे-बाज़ी' के भयानक परिणामका मर्मभेदी दिग्दर्शन करानेवाली इस पुस्तकमें सफेदपोश नरराक्षसोंके घृणित हथकण्डोंका ऐसा जीता-जागता चित्रण है कि इसे पढ़ लेनेके बाद अबोधसे अबोध बालक भी इन नारकीय जीवोंको देखते ही पहचान जायगा और इनके प्रलोभनोंसे स्वयं बचकर इन पापियोंके दुर्व्यसनोंके कारण सर्व नाशकी ओर अग्रसर होते हुए देशको भी बचानेमें समर्थ हो सकेगा। इस पुस्तककी उपादेयता और आवश्यकताका सबसे बड़ा प्रमाण इसके प्रथम संस्करणका दो महीनेके अल्पकालमें ही समाप्त हो जाना है। बढ़िया मोटे ऐंटिक काग़ज़पर छपी २१६ पृष्ठोंकी इस पुस्तकका मूल्य केवल प्रचारकी दृष्टिसे १) रखा गया है।

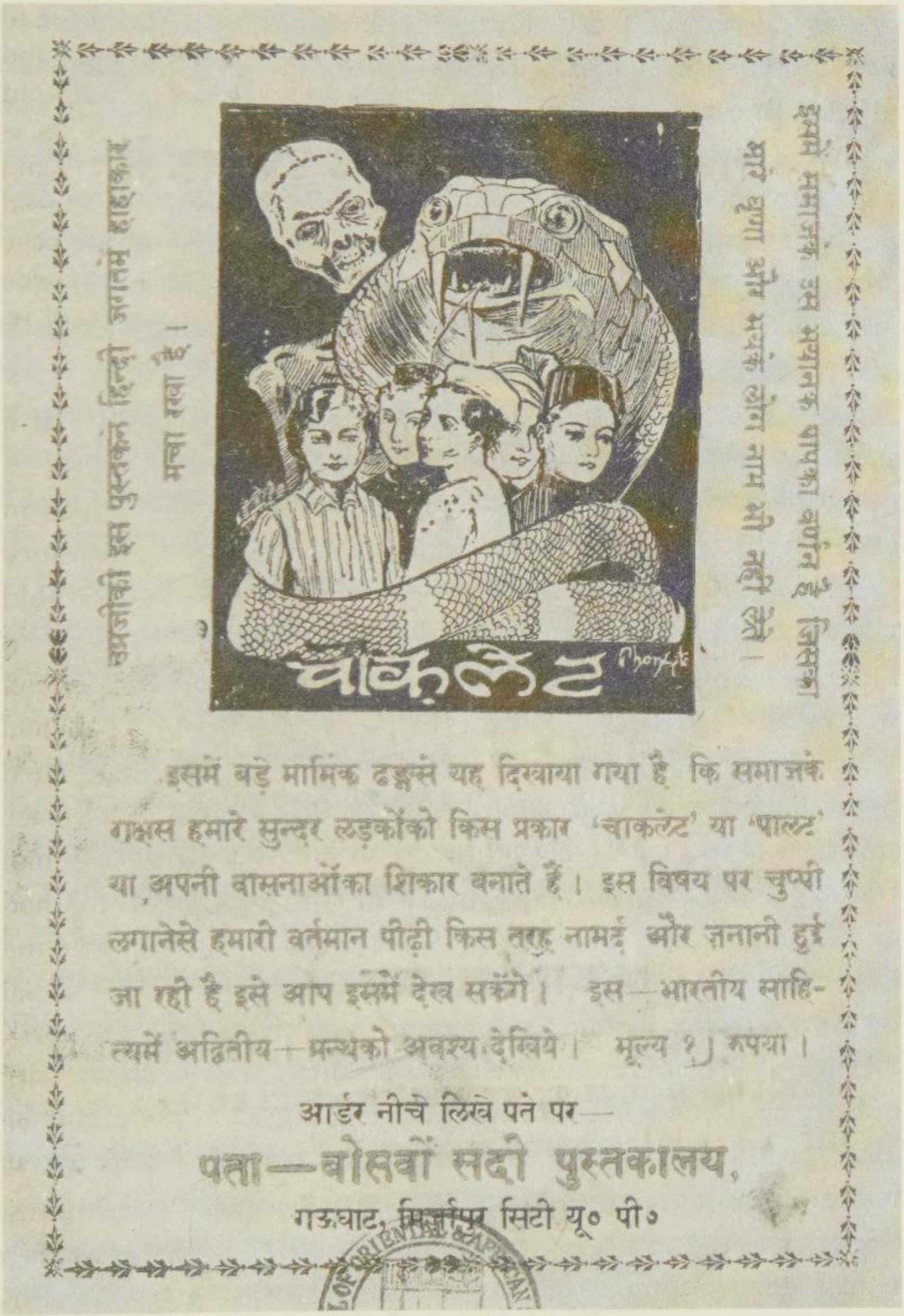
३

> of the horrible consequences of the ever increasing misdeed of our society "*launde-baazi*", has such an animated description of the devious strategies of the deceptive male demons, that after reading this, even the most innocent of boy of our society will be able to recognise these hellish creatures as soon as he sees them, and not only will he be able to save himself from their seductions but also save the nation that, due to the addictions of such rascals, is heading towards destruction. The biggest proof of the utility and the necessity of this book is the fact that its first edition was sold out in the brief period of two months. The price of this 216-page book, which is printed on excellent, thick antique paper, has been kept at 1) only from the perspective of the dissemination of its message] (Ugra 1928, Appendix 3, see Fig. 2.1).

In the advertisement, note the abrupt co-presence of a sensationalising intent and more sober, pedagogic one: "...a short-story collection that will make you hold your hearts in shock", together with "...the biggest proof of the importance and the utility of this book is that its first edition has been sold out in a short period of 2 months".

Another candidly provocative advertisement for *Chaklet* appeared in the third edition of Ugra's epistolary novel *Chand Haseenon ke Khutoot* (*Letters of Some Beautiful Ones*) published in December later that year (see Figure 2.2). Writing the preface to this short story collection, चाकलेट (*Chaklet*), Pandey Bechan Sharma whose nom de plume 'Ugra' implies fiery or forceful, had filed *launde baazi* within a catalogue of allied bad habits, targeting not only an isolated transgression but an entire scene of social misdeeds: "यदि परस्त्री गमन, वैश्यागमन, शराबखोरी [*sharaabkhori*], जुआ खेलना आदि सामाजिक पाप हैं, तो यह अप्राकृतिक-कर्म या चाकलेट-पंथी [*chaklet-panthi*] महापाप है। यदि उन पापों के विरुद्ध समाज प्रचार भी करता है और खुलेआम आलोचना-प्रत्यालोचना भी, तो इस पापके विरुद्ध भी प्रचार और आलोचनाएं होनी चाहियें" [If adultery, going to prostitutes, alcoholism (*sharab* is liquor; *khori*, implying consumption, is a device similar to *baazi*), gambling, etc., are social evils, then this unnatural deed or chaklet-panthi ('chaklet', Hindi transliteration

Figure 2.2
Advertisement for *Chaklet* in Ugra's *Chand Haseenon ke Khutoot*, December 1928



of 'chocolate', was Ugra's peculiar reference for young, beautiful boys; *panthi*, implying habit, is a device similar to *baazi* or *khori*) is a major evil. As this society voices itself against those evils and openly debates and denounces them, similarly, it should also have public voices and criticism against this evil] (Ugra 1927 (1953), prefatory page).

In the advertisement, the publisher insisted that this "book of Ugraji has caused an outcry in the world of Hindi literature" and that it contains a "description" of that "terrible evil in society" which people cannot even name because of "disgust and fear".

Launde baazi or *chaklet-panthi* is cast in the same mould as other allied forms of indulgence that are to be targeted by what is here, at any rate, formally, even if bluntly, articulated as a social-reformist literary aim. *Laundebaazi*, for Ugra, is part of a constellation of the misdeeds of demonic, hellish men and becomes recognisable precisely as part of this constellation, precisely as of a piece with its mis-en-scene of debauchery. It is positioned as yet another, albeit in this example a more intense, form of dissipation, compared to alcoholism or gambling along with which it is listed.

However, I must point out that a potential disjointing of such figurations of male-male desire, such as *laundebaazi*, from their supersets of bad habits, always looms around in early-to-mid–20th century colonial India. A disjointing from the constellation of habits precisely *as* a particularised evil as against just an indiscriminate habit, *as* a cognisably separate unnatural deed, or even *as* a taxonomic "*svajaatiya-vyabhichaar-vriti*", literally 'licentiousness-inclination-with-same-kind', translated as "[h] omosexual [t]endency" in the preface to Ugra's stories (Suman 1927, p. 41). Such a form of disjointing never fully comes about but it implies a potential independence of male-male desire from the generalised mis-en-scene of excesses in which it is set, that is, it implies an understanding of same-sex desire as *something unique in some kinds of people* that is denoted more directly in the

idiom of homosexuality. This potential disjointing is evident in Chughtai's confusions over what to call the subject of *Lihaf* and in the early phase of discussions of the Indian Psychoanalytic Society cited earlier. For now, however, it would be our task to elaborate on how the constellation of bad habits is organised, and more precisely, how does *laundebaazi* relate to the other forms in the family of connected weaknesses.

On 1 July 1927 Ramnath Lal 'Suman', a Hindi critic and poet, finished and signed off his almost 50-page essay that was to be published that same year as a major prefatory piece to Ugra's eight short stories in *Chaklet*. This essay 'अप्राकृतिक व्यभिचार का वैज्ञानिक विवेचन' [A Scientific Investigation of Unnatural Licentiousness], Suman says, was written on the special request of Ugra, his "close brother" (ibid., p. 59), and its modest aim in fulfilling this duty is to simply work as a "scientific commentary" on "this hellish subject" (ibid., pp. 21–22). Though claiming only an introductory knowledge of the topic, Suman goes on to write extensive, sometimes didactically framed but mostly speculative sections on the origins of such habits, the inner animal elements in all human beings, the role of human beings as social creatures, the etiology of all human desire as such, the excess as reason of attraction to the same kind, the ideals of calm desires, among many other subtopics.

When he is about to conclude, he appends his "scientific investigations" to the official social reformist project of Ugra's stories. He does this by tagging on some means that could be "generally" employed to reduce the incidence of "chaklet-*panthi*" (Suman 1927, p. 57). These solutions are a key to understand the composition of the place that *laundebaazi* occupies in the imagination of the early 20th century Hindi literati:

१. स्कूलों में बोर्डिंग-सिस्टम कानून बनाकर रोक दिया जाए।
२. शिक्षा के कमरे खूब लम्बे-चौड़े और चारों ओरसे खुले हों तथा प्रत्येक बालक की 'सीट' दूसरे की सीटसे कम-से-कम दो गज़ के फ़ासले पर हो। 'बेंच-सिस्टम' (एक ही बेंच पर कई बालकों के बैठने की प्रणाली) उठा दी जाए।

३. कसरत तथा पौरुष बढ़ानेवाले खेल अनिवार्य कर दियें जाएँ।
४. आचार-शिक्षा का प्रबंध किया जाए (धार्मिक-शिक्षा का नहीं) शरीर-विज्ञान की भी थोड़ी शिक्षा दी जाए।
५. जिन मास्टरों एवं लड़कों के चरित्रपर ज़रा भी संदेह हो उन्हें निकाल दिया जाए. मास्टरों को अलग करने का अधिकार जिला इंस्पेक्टर को एवं खराब लड़कों को निकालने का अधिकार प्रधानाध्यापक को रहे। इन दोनों की सहायता के लिए गंभीर एवं चरित्रवान आदमियों की एक छोटी कमेटी भी रखी जा सकती है।
६. स्कूल में पान, सिगरेट का उपयोग रोका जाए. घर पर भी लड़के इनसे तथा अन्य नशीली चीज़ों से डोर रहें, इसकी चेष्टा की जाए।
७. २० वर्ष से कम उम्र के लड़के केवल वीरता एवं देश-भक्ति पूर्ण फिल्में एवं नाटक देख सकें।
८. सवायार कटेमूड़ की 'दो-दो बातें,' 'रात में सात,' 'तोता-मैना' जैसी अश्लील एवं उत्तेजक पुस्तकें ज़ब्त की जाएँ। बाज़ार में खुले-आम बिकनेवाली नंगी एवं. घ्रिणित तसवीरें बेचनेवाले दण्डित किये जाएँ।
९. १६ वर्षसे कम अवस्था के बालकों के गले में हाथ डालकर चलना जुर्म करार दिया जाय।
१०. माता-पिता बच्चों में विलासिता की प्रवृति बढ़ने से रोकें। नौकरों पर अधिक निर्भर न करें और लड़कों को अपने हाथ-पैर पर खड़ा होने वाला बनावें।
११. मास्टरों के विरुद्ध की जाने वाली इस प्रकार की शिकायतों का एक स्थायी रजिस्टर रखा जाय जिनका इंस्पेक्टरों द्वारा निरक्षण हो।
१२. माँ-बाप लड़कों को नाचगान में शरीक होनें से रोकें। ऐसी कोशिश करें कि जातीय अथवा सांस्कारिक उत्सवों में वेश्याएं इत्यादि न बुलाई जाएँ।

[1. The boarding system in schools should be banned by law.
2. The classrooms should be long and wide, open on each side, and every boy's 'seat' should be at a minimum distance of two yards from other seats. 'Bench system' (the system whereby many boys sit on the same bench) should be removed.
3. Exercise and games that boost manliness should be made mandatory.
4. A study of ethics should be set up (not a study of religions). There should also be a little physical education.

5. Those masters and students, whose characters are a least bit suspect, should be removed. The local inspector should have the right to remove teachers and the principal should have the right to remove students. For their help, a committee of serious men, of wholesome character, could also be set up.
6. The consumption of betel and of cigarettes should be stopped in schools. Even at home, there should be an effort that boys should remain away from these and other intoxicating substances.
7. Boys of 20 years or less should watch only those films and plays that are based on bravery and patriotism for the nation.
8. Obscene and provocative books like Savaayaar Katumedh's 'Do-do Batein', 'Raat Mein Saat', 'Tota-Maina' should be seized. Those who sell nude and disgusting pictures openly in the market should be punished.
9. Walking with your hands over the shoulders of boys who are 16 years or less should be declared to be a crime.
10. Parents should stop the tendency towards luxury in their kids. They should not be made very dependent on the servants and the boys should be trained to become self-made.
11. These sort of complaints against the teachers should be filed in a permanent register that the local inspector should inspect from time to time.
12. Parents should stop their boys from taking part in singing and dancing. Efforts should be made that prostitutes and others of the ilk should not be called for communal and cultural programmes] (ibid., pp. 57–59).

The involvement of boys in *laundebaazi* happens in an environment where one form of indulgence triggers another. This involvement is not conceptualised as a pre-set personal state of being but instead as a gradual corrosion. It becomes meaningless without its atmosphere of obscene books and pictures, betel nuts

and cigarettes, laziness and luxury, corrupting films and plays and singing and dancing. "...smoke and chew betels, / no, no, *all intoxicants are alike*" (Habib 1995, p. 327, emphasis mine). The means to remedy this particular habit among boys is not proposed as a diagnosis for a localised, individual condition but instead as a larger, necessarily continuous roadmap towards an ideal social manhood.

This roadmap involves an excoriation of softness in favour of a robust and brave personal character, which was frequently articulated in early 20th century Hindi nationalist publications like *Aaj* ('Today', established 1920, Varanasi) and *Swadesh* ('One's Own Nation', established 1921, Varanasi), and imagined by Suman and his contemporaries as necessary to the fight for political self-determination. In studying late 19th and early 20th century language debates in north India, specifically between the 'chaste' Hindi and 'licentious' Urdu, and within Hindi between a supposedly 'upright' Khari Boli and the 'soft' Braj Bhasha, the historian Charu Gupta has noted a dramatic insistence among the nationalist proponents of Hindi and Khari Boli on the values of strength, toughness and manliness which they saw necessary for effective nationalism (see Gupta 2001a, pp. 4293–95). In the throes of the Gandhi-led non-cooperation movement (1920–22), the 21-year-old Ugra had articulated his feverish *kaamna* (aspiration) for an independent nation, an aspiration which was framed as a poetic manifesto for vigour and force, and a castigation of the whole aesthetic of political pliability and of a spongy, feminine civility. His poem *Kaamna* had appeared in Shiv Prasad Gupta's newspaper *Aaj*:

भयंकर ज्वालायें
जाग उठें, सब ओर आग की ही हो जाए भरमार!
मधुर रागिनी नहीं चाहते –
और न स्वर सुकुमार!
वज्र-नाद-सा बोल उठे हम सबके उर का तार!

[Fierce Flames
Should rise, in every corner should this fire reign!
We do not desire a soft song –
and no tender voice!
May our heart-strings strike like thunderbolts] (quoted in Ugra's autobiography *Apni Khabar*, 1960, p. 111).

Apt for such a fierce nationalist *kaamna* voiced by his friend, Suman's solution is not offered as a simple conversion from one predetermined state to another, but instead as a permanent path of self-improvement, flagged, for instance, with routines of exercise and robust, manly games, a study of ethics and independence from servants. The *laundebāaz* has no easy antonym or obverse, like the homosexual finds in heterosexual; it is instead conceptualised on an awkward sliding scale of self-fashioning, where one's path, an ideally unremitting path, towards social usefulness and ideal communal roles has been partially undermined.

Suman suggests a series of solutions, some more impractical than others, to reinstitute the *baaz* back into the process of realising his ideal social and political functions. The figure of the *baaz* is, even when socially disapproved, always conceived of as morally and socially reclaimable. Theoretically, there is never an unbridgeable gap or a separate ontology that keeps him away from a possible repatriation.[5]

[5] In fact the underlying idea in much of Ugra's writings, if we sieve through his social-reformist zeal, is that having some bad habits (especially if one is a man) is what makes one ordinary, what makes one human, similar to most others. It is in fact 'extraordinary' or 'unusual' to have no bad habits at all. In his memoir *Apni Khabar* published in 1960, Ugra talks of one of his "respectable friends" who had deep interest (*shauk*) for poetry and for exercise, and who had lost his heart, when young, to a male hockey player with a well-formed body, and later, after getting married and having children, to a prostitute. "I must say that I really like such willful men, despite their defects [*aib*, weaknesses]. Who is without weaknesses? Only God" (1960, pp. 124–27). For more on the 'fall' into same-sex desire as a 'fall' into ordinariness, into the quotidian, see Amarkant (1959) 2004, pp. 34–36.

In the short story that was first published in May 1924 in the Calcutta-based paper *Matvala* and which later appeared as the title story in the collection *Chaklet*, Ugra weaves in an elaborate scene of *baazi*. The opening sequence does not introduce a character alone but an entire demeanor:

"बेक़रारी क्यों न हो ताज़ा शिकारे इश्क हूँ,
चोट वह खाई है दिलपर जो कभी खायी ना थी"

उपर्युक्त शेरको ज़रा स्वर–करुण-स्वर–से कहकर हमारे मित्र बाबु दिनकर प्रसाद बी. ऐ., मतवालेकी तरह कुर्सी पर एक और लुढ़क गए। मैंने मन में विचार किया, माजरा क्या है? आज यह इतने सुस्त क्यों हैं? फिर पुछा–

"खैरियत तो है? आज तो हुजूर कुछ मजनून बने बैठे हैं।"

दिनकर बाबूने फिर एक लम्बी सांस खींचकर कहा...

["Why should I not be restless, love has made me its prey,

Today my heart carries a wound like never before."

Reciting the verses above in a soft voice—a piteous voice—our friend Babu Dinkar Prasad B.A. tumbled on to the chair like a sot. I thought, what is the matter? Why is he so languid today? Then I asked—

"Is everything all right? Sir seems to have become a Majnun today.

After a long sigh, Dinkar Babu said...] (Ugra 1927a, p. 97).

The sequence is replete with soft voices and long sighs, with gushy recitations of lovelorn Urdu couplets and languid tumblings on to chairs. The opening shots feature Babu Dinkar Prasad not simply as an individual person but more crucially as a persona, fitted with the generalisable traits of the *baaz*. He is a sot, under the influence of wine and love, and is mythified by being likened to the legendary lover, Majnun, of the classical Perso-Arabic story of star-crossed lovers.

Gopal, the over-ingenuous narrator is surprised by Dinkar's

spontaneous "कविता पाठ सम्मलेन" [poetry reading event] (ibid., p. 98) and his general stupor. Soon, as Dinkar leaves upon being called to the door by the object of his love, Gopal is told by another friend, Manohar, the reason for Dinkar's peculiar manner. He has fallen, Manohar says, for a boy, his "chaklet", his "pocket-book", a "13–14 year old beautiful lad" (ibid., pp. 99–100). True to the contagious world of 'bad influence', the persona of the younger loved object is cast in the protracted shadow of the decadence of its lover. In a letter that Manohar writes to Gopal to share his thoughts on "this subject", he says:

> देश के नवयुवक ज़नाने हुए जा रहे हैं। एक बालक जब यह देखता है की उसके दुसरे साथी पर अधिक लोग आकर्षित हैं, तब वह भी अपने साथी का अनुकरण करने की चेष्टा करने लगता है। 'वेनोलिया' के बाद 'व्हाइट-रोज़' और 'व्हाइट-रोज़' के बाद 'पियर्स-सोप' की सहायता से चाकलेट बनने की चेष्टा आरम्भ होती है। लड़कों की पढ़ाई-लिखाई का समय सुन्दर बनने के प्रयत्न में चला जाता है। और रूप की दुकानदारी के फेर में पड़ने के कारण उनके मस्तिष्क दुर्बल, वासनाएं प्रबल और आदतें घृणित हो जाती हैं [The youth of this nation are becoming more and more feminised. When one boy sees that more people are attracted to his friend, he starts mimicking this friend. After Venolea he uses White-Rose, after White-Rose he uses Pears Soap; all these help him begin his attempts in becoming a *chaklet*. The time which could have been spent in studying is wasted in becoming beautiful. Once they are deeply entrenched in this business of beauty, their brains become weaker, their lusts stronger and their habits more disgusting] (Ugra 1927a, p. 102).

Later when Gopal is visited by Dinkar and his young friend at his house, Gopal notices that the boy had "playful eyes" and was like a "beautiful flower", an "offering of the Gods" (ibid., p. 103). He could become a "beautiful Indian," he muses, if it were not for Dinkar. The older men corrupt boys who could have become valuable citizens of a liberated nation, and the boys corrupt each other. The figures participating in *baazi*—and organising this entire scene of corruption and self-indulgence—are cumulatively materialised with the debasing consumption

of imperial cosmetics like Venolea, White-Rose, Pears Soap (see Gadihoke 2010).[6]

In another story '*Paalat*', in the same collection by Ugra, *baazi* is presented as a space assembled with fineries. The beloved boy is described wearing "चिकनका बंगला कुरता, मखमली पोतकी, विचित्र ढंग से पहनी हुई धोती, बढ़िया पम्प-शू, रिस्तवाच, तिरछी टोपी" [an embroidered

[6] Chocolate, then, made sense. It was part of the catalogue of imperial products that came to be seen as degrading but not in any localised way, as if for the palette or for the stomach, but degrading in a very a widespread, general manner. White-Rose, Pears, Venolea, the commodities Manohar mentions dotted the homes of the middle classes of his colonial city Calcutta. It was the soap industry, in fact, as Anne Mclintock and Sabeena Gadihoke have reminded us, which was the first major imperial net of products, furiously advertised in the colonies, so much so that for the longest time, just advertising, be it for anything, was also called "selling soap" (Gadihoke 2010, p. 1; McClintock 2001). Images of soap advertisements that were regular in colonial English newspapers, or as calendars, would jam the visual *Swadeshi* imagination of Suman, or of Ugra, even as he mobilised the image-repertoires of his story characters, sunk as they were in looking at themselves in the mirrors, going to the cinema all decked up, wearing tight, silk *churidar* payjamas, looking after one's skin and hands, and sporting fabrics infinitely softer than the *khaadi* associated with Gandhian nationalism. Excess was an entire prospectus of imperial products, each triggering the use of the other, each making space for the other. In Ugra's scheme, alcohol and boys and chocolate were all part of the same picture, they egged each other on. Historically, it is quite ironic then that one of the major reasons why the Englishman John Cadbury, the founder of Cadbury chocolates, who was a Quaker, went into the business of tea, coffee and chocolate was because he wanted to drive working class people away from alcohol. He had lofty beliefs in and was active in the 19th century Temperance movement in England. "He felt alcohol was a major cause of poverty and other ills among working people. He saw cocoa and chocolate as an alternative to alcohol" (Samuel 2000). In fact, the whole of the dream factory town that his sons set up in Bournville near Birmingham for their growing business, true to their Quaker beliefs, did not have a single pub (Bryson and Lowe 2002: Samuel 2000). By the time this same chocolate reached the young nationalist Ugra in the colony though, its symbolism, its uses, its family of associations and effects had turned into something else altogether, something more 'corrupting', more 'addictive', an object of bad habits.

Bengali kurta, a velvety dhoti worn in a strange manner, excellent pump shoes, wrist-watch and an askew cap] (Ugra 1927a, p. 118). The finery of clothes and accessories contributes to the patterns of excessive habits, stitching together the world of *baazi*. It becomes the place where *various* forms of male desires are articulated. The desire for boys is framed as contiguous with this love of fashion.

In 'The Golden Spittoon', the tenth chapter of her autobiography *Kaghazi Hai Pairhan*, Ismat Chughtai talks of the twins, Munne Miyan and Pyare Miyan, who were enrolled with her brother at the Aligarh University. In Ugra's official social-reformist schema, these boys would be seen as symptomatic of the moral and physical waning thought to be brought about by fashion, cosmetics and luxury, quite useless to the project of building ideal men to fight for and run the देश [nation] (see Ugra December 1928, appendix 3), for the training as the future "शासनके सूत्रधार" [the architects of governance] (Ugra 1953 क; pages are denoted in Hindi letters in the original). Chughtai uses a Marathi word to describe their demeanour, *fatkal*, which implies someone "without control or composure" (Mario D'Penha, personal email, August 2010), close to the Hindi *munhfat*, "someone who speaks rather freely" (Sameena Dalwai, personal email, August 2010). "Typically," it would refer "to someone who cannot control his or her tongue, so *tondacha fatkal*" would mean "someone who has a loose tongue. But it can also refer to *hathacha fatkal*, i.e., someone with a loose fist, given to beating people up" (ibid.). Within such a backdrop of degeneracy, finery and excess, Munne Miyan and Pyare Miyan's lack of relish for women is a positively banal fact, if not actively constitutive of their persona:

[नवाब के] दो जुड़वाँ साहबज़ादे अलीगढ़ भेजे गए थे...उन लड़कों की सोहबत में नाच-गाने के जलसों में [शमीम] बड़ी पाबन्दी से शरीक होते...पढ़ने-लिखने का कोई प्रोग्राम न था. ये लड़के एक शानदार कोठी में अपने अमले के साथ बस हुल्लड़ मचाया करते थे। नवाब साहब ने जबरदस्त अतिया यूनीवर्सिटी को दिया था। मगर ये साहबज़ादे... जार्जेट के ज़रदोज़ी काम के कुरते, रेशमी, चुस्त पाजामे और कामदार जूते पहने क्लास में कभी ठुमकते आ जाते। उनके साथ साज़िंदे भी क्वाटर्स में रहते थे। रोज़ नाच-गाने

का प्रोग्राम जमता। यूनीवर्सिटी के निकम्मे और चापलूसी में माहिर उनकी दरबारी पर तैनात रहते...जुड़वाँ साहबज़ादे कुछ फटकल [*fatkal*] क़िस्म के थे। औरतों से कतई दिलचस्पी नहीं थी। खूब सजते और मेक-अप करते थे [(Nawab's) twin heirs were sent to Aligarh...In the company of those boys (Shameem) used to regularly take part in the song and dance gatherings...there was no plan to study. These boys lived in a magnificent mansion with their staff and caused a lot of uproar all the time. Nawab Sahab had given a huge grant to the university. These spoiled ones...used to sometimes sway into the class wearing georgette kurtas with golden handiwork, silky hugging pajamas and stylish shoes. Their crew used to stay with them in their quarters. There they kept up daily routine of singing and dancing. All the fools and the sycophants of the university used to hang around their mansion...the twins were of the fatkal sort. They had no interest in women. They used to dress up a lot and apply a lot of make-up] (Chughtai 1998, pp. 165–66).

(Launde)Baazi as a Political Metaphor

In her introduction to *Sexualities* (2007), the feminist scholar Nivedita Menon talks of a "strange partnership" in colonial India of "British colonial institutions" and "the modernizing nationalist elites who opposed the British" when it came to the question of sexuality (see pp. xvii–xxiv). Both carried on, she argues, a sanitising drive in the name of "modernizing", whereby "earlier forms of sexuality, family and property arrangements that did not conform to modern bourgeois patriarchal ideals, were reconstituted to fit these ideals [to varying degrees of success]" (ibid.). The historian Charu Gupta elaborates on how this "strange partnership' panned out in colonial north India, particularly Uttar Pradesh, where both the Hindu middle classes and social reformers and the British elite, whose "sensibilities were often shaped by indigenous perceptions" came to exercise control over representations and practices of sexuality, excoriating and often exorcising content that it did not deem desirable (2001a, pp. 1–84).

In this section, I argue that as these colonial and anti-colonial forces both projected an increasingly moralised discourse about what counted as a civilised and modern nation, and what could be deemed as effective nationalist politics, *laundebaazi* and the broader symbolic order it signified became the site where these political contestations often took place. The world signified in *laundebaazi* became a kernel of several of these reformist debates, wherein a desirable nation was to be forged precisely by distinguishing it from its own past that was now recalibrated as a site of backward, feminine, feudal or degenerate elements, all of which were seen as metomynically represented in and crystallised within invocations of *laundebaazi*. *Laundebaazi* supplied some essential metaphorics for these political debates as it came to stand in for a backward, corrupting and emasculating force that was seen as stymying both the morals and the political ambitions of the nationalist elite, whether Hindu or Muslim, and whether politicians, writers, educationists or social reformers. Same-sex desire and sex, and particularly its invocation within the idiom of excess, as in *baazi*, became a political metaphor that was deployed repeatedly and often publicly.

One such political site was the language debates in the late 19th and early 20th century colonial north India (see King 1992; Gupta 2001b; Orsini 2009). Various scholars have studied how "language became," over this period, "both among the Muslim gentry and the Hindu upper-castes, a means and symbol of community-creation" and as something, whose specific "desirable" and "undesirable" forms were seen respectively as either strengthening or sapping anti-colonial politics of the period (Gupta 2001b, p. 4293). In these debates, Hindi and Urdu, and within Hindi, the dialects of Khari Boli and Braj Bhasha, often came to occupy polemical extremes, where Urdu and Braj Bhasha came to signify for many reformist Hindu publicists a backward-looking world given to moral dissolution, obscenity, bad habits and emasculation. The world of *(launde)baazi* and

its alleged feminising effect was sometimes explicitly invoked and almost always implied during the course of these resonant debates. Writing in July 1901 for the Hindi *Kayastha Samachar*, one N. Gupta wrote an article titled 'A National Literature for Hindustan' in which he argues that the

> ...entire range of Urdu poetry is *characterised by an effeminacy as degrading to the intellect as are vice to a people*, and if truth must be told *the effeminacy of Urdu poetry and songs has been in keeping with the growing effeminacy of the people* who had the keeping of Urdu literature. The high-sounding and elaborate forms of expression in Urdu have become almost the by-word and are a subject of standing amusement (in Gupta 2001b, p. 4294, emphases mine).

Earlier in 1868, Raja Shivprasad of Banaras who, as Charu Gupta notes, later became a staunch supporter of the use of the Devanagari script in government offices over the Urdu script, wrote in his *Memorandum Court Character in the Upper Provinces of India* that

> [t]o read Persian ...is to become Persianised, all *our ideas become corrupt and our nationality is lost...All the evils which we find amongst us* we are indebted to our "beloved brethren" the Muhammadans. *Manliness is the first thing they have entirely extinguished from the land* (in Gupta 2001b, p. 4294; emphases mine).

Both Shivprasad and Gupta's comments are reminiscent of worlds Ugra creates in his stories. They are also reminiscent of the political narrative which Ugra feels the need to at least nominally couch his stories within—that the *laundebaaz* is corrupting the youth of this nation and making them incapable of resistance or self-rule.[7] What Raja Shivprasad calls "the evils" that "we find

[7] In a personal conversation, Charu Gupta, who has studied Ugra and his *Chaklet* stories extenstively, told me that Ugra can only be understood as an 'anomaly' within this world of the Hindu publicists like Shivprasad and Gupta in late 19th and early 20th century Uttar Pradesh. Even though he might have hat-tipped the conservative mandates of such publicists in the concluding

amongst us" are embodied in Babu Dinkar Prasad, the upper caste Hindu protagonist of Ugra's short story who quotes Urdu ghazals, and who is seen by the narrator as a figure of moral corruption and incorporated into a larger narrative of the political decline of the nation, and made to pose as the reason for such decline, by making "the youth of this nation...more and more feminized" (Ugra 1927).

This rhetoric of political decline of the nation was not only limited to the strong Hindu–Hindi versus spent Muslim–Urdu axes, it also internally differentiated the Hindi language into the "manly" Khari Boli and the "excessive" and "erotic" Braj Bhasha (Gupta 2001b, p. 4295). Charu Gupta points out that with increasing reformist puritanism, the proponents of Khari Boli Hindi attacked what they saw as excessively sensual Braj poetry of the Riti period. We should remember that Braj poetry, and its sensuous scenes of Krishna's *leela* or play with the gopis, were also invoked by Ugra in *Chaklet* quite seamlessly along with Urdu poetry to mark the larger affective terrains of his *laundebaaz* protagonists. It is important to point out that these language debates—whether between Khari Boli and Braj, or between Hindi and Urdu—were taking place in a distinctly politicised terrain. The language debates were incorporated within and responded to the larger narrative—propounded in 19th century colonial historiography and shared by many from the native elites—that framed British colonialism as having become possible due to the 'emasculation' of Hindu natives, both under Muslim rule and by some of their own corrupting influences, such as

moments of his short-stories and in the prefatorial machinery of his book, she suggested and as is clear from the earlier sections of this chapter, his stories themselves substantially spilled over such mandates. Afterall, what N. Gupta of *Kayastha Samachar* calls 'the effeminacy of Urdu poetry' gives Babu Dinkar Prasad, the upper caste Hindu protagonist of Ugra's short story, the expressive mechanisms to articulate his love for the boy he has fallen for, to become his *Majnun*.

those signified in Braj Bhasha (see Thapar 1982). Within these language debates, the "general image of the [political] period immediately preceding British rule," Gupta points out, "was of chaos and courtly decadence...[and Braj poetry of] the Riti Kal was seen by most contemporary Hindi writers as symbolic of that decay" (2001a, p. 43). In the year 1928, during the fifth Hindi Sahitya Sammelan at Lucknow, such anxieties about the alleged feminisation and political weakening expressed itself clearly. Proposing the use of more Hindi words in the masculine gender, the manifesto of the Sammelan painted a picture of Lucknow that is not unlike the world painted in Ugra's stories which are often set in the city:

> If new words are spoken in the feminine gender, then the masculinity of our speech uselessly gets reduced and words signifying femininity get increased. *If this continues then Hindi would soon be reduced to a language of women.* In Lucknow words like 'motor' and 'kameez' are used in feminine gender, which shows the delicate nature of people. *However, now such days are past when delicacy was an identification of rich people. New words...must be spoken in the masculine gender* now (in Gupta 2001a, p. 4295, emphases mine).

These three instances highlight how the language debates orchestrated fears around emasculation and searched for its causes within the various scenes of excess or *baazi*. By doing this, a specifically political rhetoric among several nationalist reformers and the colonial elite could be buttressed, a rhetoric wherein the world of excess was seen, like much of colonial historiography projected, as an essential condition of the native past (often explicitly Islamised but not always) which needed to be transformed by the many modernising drives. This intended transformation from excess to sobriety, from softness to strength, from feminine sexual fluidity to masculine restraint was seen within much anti-colonial politics as particularly crucial for making effective claims for self-determination. It is clear that

the world of *(launde)baazi* had to be managed to achieve such a political goal.

In her book *For the Record: On Sexuality and the Colonial Archive in India* (2009), Anjali Arondekar has argued that repeated references to this larger world of excess, particularly to same-sex desire and within it specifically to "native pederasty", was extremely instrumental to the larger "project of colonial difference" (p. 46). What could establish the "logic of native ontological perversity" and "disorder" better than the repeated highlighting of instances of same-sex desire and sex as a "crime" "so prevalent" in the colony, as a "native habit", as "le vice in the East" (ibid., pp. 88, 10, 18, 41). In each of these invocations by the colonial elite, same-sex desire and sex, particularly pederasty, came to provide a political "register of disorder and perversion" seen as essential to the colony which the colonial machinery could then claim to be ordering and disciplining by its political rule (p. 35). The colony was usually seen as "replicas of Sodom and Gomorrah", as sites of "special Oriental vices" which were seen as having weakened the native (Hyam 1990, p. 123). Constantly referring to 'native pederasty' and to the staple persona of the degenerate king given to such habits would strengthen the familiar tropes of colonial historiography, which claimed that British colonialism was supplanting Indian princely kingdoms weakened by centuries of decadence, by the rule of such degenerate kings. Such a framing of same-sex desire as metonymically marking the terrain of perversion and disorder in the so-constituted native past, which is its precise role as a political metaphor, was also shared and mobilised by many amongst the Indian elite, Hindus and Muslims, in their own reformist projects. Although Chughtai would have many dramatic run-ins in her career with such reformists, particularly the literary reformists of the Progressive Writers Association, she does partake of some of this framing when she writes the particular passage on the 'dissolute' song-and-dance world of

Munne Miyan and Pyare Miyan who had "no interest in women" cited earlier.[8] Chughtai invokes their feminine walking style, their dress and their lack of "interest in women" almost as a metonym for the nepotistic and corrupt world of their father the Nawab of Jawra, whose obscenely huge grant to the Aligarh Muslim University gives Munne and Pyare the license for all their 'dubious' activities. The Nawab's corrosive influence, connections and money are then shown by Chughtai as being duplicated in the minor feudalised courts of his sons' own "staff" and "crew" that had "all the fools and the sycophants of the university". Within this particular passage, if not elsewhere in the book, Chughtai seems to invoke the site of same-sex desire and of male effeminacy, that is, to invoke the world

[8] As an instance of this particular framing of the Progressive Writers Association, see Geeta Patel's discussion of the "theoretical 'theocratic' materials" produced by the Indian Progressive Writers Association in the 1930s/40s, of which she finds Akhtar Husain Raipuri's '*Adab aur zindagi*' [Literature and Life] to be a "highlight" (2002, p. 113). To write his "[hi]story of literature", Raipuri was deeply interested in defining "three temporal spaces", in defining a version of the "past" against which the social–literary activity and ideals of the present and the future could be fashioned (ibid., p. 115). For Raipuri, Patel outlines, "[t]he past was feudal, a time of Oriental despotism, its ornamental poetry funded by a royal, moneyed elite", the present was capitalist and its literature satisfied the middle classes, and the future was utopian and egalitarian where literature was produced without constraints, in a classless society (ibid., pp. 115–16). In the chapter titled 'The Terms of the Encounter: Miraji and the Progressive Writers' Association', Patel argues that the Progressives, in proposing a call for literature as "social action", offered a "univocal system" for deciding what was "good"/"bad" or "political"/"apolitical" writing (ibid., pp. 82–128, 390). Often, she writes, and this is crucial for my own discussion, "[t]he charges leveled by the PWA against bad literature…were, among others, directed at the particular ways in which 'sexuality' was explored by certain authors like Miraji, Ismat Chughtai, and Manto" (ibid., p. 103). The temporal conceit of "progress", defined by this literary movement, often meant leaving the so-called "deviant", "excessive", "obscene" or "abnormal" (mostly terms of colonial law and medicine) versions of "sexuality" behind (ibid.).

of *laundebaazi*, precisely as a political metaphor, signifying corruption and decadence and, even if implicitly, seems to open it to the question of reform.

I will close this section on *laundebaazi* as a political metaphor with a discussion of an important moment in Muslim social-literary reform in colonial India. In 1879, the Urdu poet and critic Altaf Hussain Hali (1837–1914) finished and published his poem *Musaddas e-Madd o-Jazr e-Islam* (An elegiac poem on the Ebb and Tide of Islam) which he had been writing since the mid-1870s in Lahore and Delhi. Syed Ahmed Khan (1817–98), the leader of the Aligarh movement for social and educational reform among the Muslims in late 19th century India, found the employment of his reformist ideals so perfectly executed in the language and aim of Hali's poem that he asserted "without a doubt, [that] I was the incentive of this" poem and wrote of it as his own "greatest work, so that when God asks me what I have done, I will answer that I caused Hali to write the *Mussadas*, and nothing more (need I say)" (quoted in Steele 1981, p. 13).

Hali's *Mussadas* was in "clear", "virtuous" and "fluent" verse a history of the fate of Islam, a history that framed its telling through the powerful rhetorical categories of "rise" and "fall" of a religious community, and thus vindicated a programme for contemporaneous reformist change championed by his friend and mentor Syed Ahmed Khan (ibid.). The literary form and political aims of *Musaddas* were to find an exhaustive theoretical elaboration in Hali's own critical manifesto *Muqaddamah-i Shi'r-o-Sha'iri* (The Trial of Poetry) published 14 years later in 1893 (Steele 1981, p. 13).

Hali had begun rigorously conceptualising and writing his *Muqaddamah* in the early-1880s; in 1882, he wrote in a letter that he was writing "an extensive essay on the poetry of Muslims, in which [he would]... write about the true situation of Urdu poetry" (quoted in Steele 1981, p. 16). In the same letter he articulated the purpose of literary reform in ambitious artistic and

political terms, saying that "the goal of this work is to point out ways of reforming Urdu poetry, which has become very bad and noxious, and to make apparent the extent to which poetry can be useful to the nation and to art, if it is based on high principles" (ibid.). True to his literary project, Altaf Hussain had changed his nom-de-plume from Xastah which implied wounded or exhausted to Hali which meant modern or new, a change that was colossal in its significance for it signalled an overhauling of an entire *way of life* and of the artist's image of himself in it.

Hali lashes out at world of the Urdu *ghazal* with its erotic themes of cruel unrequiting beloveds and sighing, pitiful lovers, themes which he newly frames within the contemporary reformist vocabulary as decadent, petrified and narrow minded (ibid.). He likens the enervation of the subject matter of the Urdu verse to bones that have been sucked dry (ibid., p. 26). The nebulous world which is the target of Hali's official criticism is precisely the world of *baazi*, a world that fed off the legendary scenes of the Urdu *ghazal* and was itself cited in it. A world that held together and made possible, for instance, the eroticism and the practices of Ugra's protagonists in *Chaklet*, supplying them with the apposite means, the glossary and the fitting atmosphere. This world's characteristic traits of excess, performance and vivid habits are aimed to be shorn off when Hali newly arranges it within the generic didacticism of a manifesto, now finding the arrow-like glance, the hair-thin waist, the cypress-like body, the almond-like eyes, the ruby-like lips, the hunter-like beloved and the prey-like lover of the Urdu *ghazal* enormously nauseating (ibid., p. 32). The mis-en-scene of *baazi* is in crisis due to what Hali terms "a great revolution in the thinking of Muslims" (ibid., p. 11), inspired by publications such as Syed Ahmed's Aligarh-based *Tahzib Al-Axlaq* (Social Reformer, first issue 1870), which contemptibly viewed "[t]he old styles of Urdu and Persian composition" as "frivolous" (ibid.) and as obstructions to the *tarraqqi* (progress) of the Indian Muslims.

It is not incidental that Hali articulates his agenda for literary

reform in explicitly political terms. He envisions the changed world of verse and subject matter as emerging necessarily from a changed nature of political relationships between men. The strategy to exorcise the excess within the male poets and amend the classic themes of the "erotic" and the "eulogistic" (Steele 1981, p. 32) is offered unambiguously as a historical roadmap towards a different political formation. The figure of the *baaz* finds sustenance in a particular feudalistic political climate which supplies the means and objects for his habits and a fitting venue for his indulgences; a change in this political climate will affect the very conditions that make such a figure probable.

Hali stretches his reformist history of verse between the over-polarised political formations of "monarchy" and the "republic" (ibid., p. 25). The monarch's court, Hali asserts, organises the entire vocation of the poet in such a way that all his verse is laid at the service of the king, using an array of excessive metaphors of praise and images that resound with flattery and submission. The court, a tiered political space which institutes heavily imbalanced relationships between men, favours an aesthetic of excess and exaltation based on an acute dependence of the poet on the favours of his regal patron (ibid.). "Ubaid Zakani [Persian poet, d. 1370]," Hali writes, "in spite of being a learned man, spent his entire life as a jester because of the king's like of jesting. In court, free speech is transformed into flattery" (quoted in Steele 1981, p. 25). The regal court is a web of exceptionally tiered relationships that operate around several specific centres of authority with the chief one being that of the king. It is a cluster of densely auratic relationships between officials demanding elaborate symbolic protocols of respect and favours, obedience and rewards. The aura into which these symbolic gestures feed always concentrates on some figures more than others, thus securing the conventional disparity of any exchange between them.

The Nawab of Javra, mentioned earlier, was the one-time employer of Chughtai's two brothers and her after she got her

Bachelor of Arts degree in Lucknow. He was at the centre of such a feudal web of disparate relationships, albeit a web that was, in the early-to-mid–20th century India, poised on the verge of transforming; "नवाब साहब थे तो छोटे से नवाब" [although he was a *small* Nawab] (Chughtai 1998, p. 164, emphasis mine). His authority over his *riyasat* (estate, dominion), which was worth Rupees 18 lakh annually and most of which he spent on himself and his family's well-being, was enacted by an entire template of conventional gestures (ibid., pp. 164–65), the likes of which are targeted in Hali's manifesto and are seen as triggers of literary decadence and corrupt morality, as obstructions to the real progress of a community.

Chughtai's elder brother Azeem Bhai, aka Munne bhai, worked on the Nawab's estate and had by his influence got his younger brother Nanhe bhai appointed in the position of the estate's revenue secretary; "नवाब जावरा अज़ीम भाई को बड़ा मानते थे। न जाने क्या जोड़-तोड़ करके यह साबित कर दिया गया था की नवाब साहब से हमारा ननिहाल से रिश्ता निकलता है" [Azeem bhai was always in the good books of the Nawab of Javra. By some complicated permutation and combination, it had somehow been established that we had a blood relationship with the Nawab on our maternal side] (ibid., p. 164). However, Nanhe bhai, once appointed as the revenue secretary, refused to act out the conventions that propped up this net of hierarchical relationships in the Nawab's estate. Already in Chughtai's memoir is the feudal reduced to a catalogue of gestures, into a language that is beginning to float above political contexts that work differently on the ground—the feudal as half-nostalgic, as a set of unhinged behaviours and words, as something that works in belatedness and irony. The passage in Chughtai where Nanhe's irreverence is recounted is a testimony to the historical fact of the local crises of the feudal or princely framework of politics in early 20th century India. The very fact that this passage can take the form of a comedy of errors, as it does in Chughtai, is evidence of the modern

disenchantment with the aura of the feudal network of relations, a network which I am arguing was the expressive venue of the idiom of *baazi*:

> ...मुन्ने भाई ने शिकायत की। नन्हे भाई को इतना अच्छा ओहदा मिला है मगर सब पटरा किये दे रहे हैं! सबसे पहले तो हस्ब-क़ायदा तीन बार झुककर सलाम करने पर अड़ गए। बहुत समझाया कि भई, दरबार के कुछ क़ायदे हैं, वो तुम्हारे लिए कैसे बदले जा सकते हैं...जब दरबार में हाज़िर हुए तो ऊंची आवाज़ से अस्सलाम-अलैकुम कहा और इससे पहले की नवाब साहब बैठने की इजाज़त देते, बैठ गए। मजबूरन नवाब साहब को वालैकुम-सलाम कहना पड़ा और बैठने का हुक्म भी बाद में ही दे पाए क्योंकि वह बैठ चुके थे और वह भी टांग पर टांग रखकर बेतकल्लुफ़ी से हस्ब-आदत घुटना हिला रहे थे। दरबार में सन्नाटा छाया हुआ था... [...Munne bhai had complained. Nanhe bhai has got such a good position but he is spoiling everything! First of all, he was stubborn about the custom of bowing three times and salaaming the Nawab. We explained a lot to him, listen, there are some conventions in the court, how can they be changed for you alone...but when he arrived at the court, he stridently said his assalaam-valekum and before the Nawab sahib could give him the permission to sit, he sat down. Constrained like this, the Nawab sahib had to say valekum-salaam and could give his permission only after Nanhe bhai had already sat down, and that too very casually, one leg over the other, shaking his knee, as was his habit. There was a hush in the entire court...] (ibid.).

In his *Muqaddamah*, Hali favoured the political structure of the "republic" because "in a monarchy, the poet is forced to bow to the whims of the court to such a degree that his true emotions and real thoughts are gradually ground into the dust and he becomes a slave to the court", "crying like a beggar at the door of greed and lust" (paraphrased in Steele 1981, p. 25). "In a republic," on the other hand, Hali argued, theoretically and idealistically, "the poet can make great progress... [t]he government does not honor him nor help him and the poet that writes with greatest freedom is popular, not the poet who is under the protection of the king, and is afraid of his anger" (ibid.). The political setting of a monarchy, Hali implies, gives full reign to the habitual inclinations, the *shauk* of the "king, upon whose

behavior there are no checks" (ibid.). The validation of this culture of habits, *shauk* or 'रुझान' [*rujhaan* implying inclination] whether for dancing, alcohol or boys, radiates from the several centres of authority which duplicate and extend themselves in inconsistent but effective patterns of connections and influence.

Chughtai's family's wish to establish a blood relationship, however tenuous, with the Nawab is precisely the wish to enter these patterns of connections and influence. In her autobiography, this influence appears frequently as 'रसूख' [*rasookh*] and is invariably seen as invested in the male figures, usually bureaucrats, nawabs, politicians, judges, writers or elder brothers. Recounting her childhood days in the princely state of Jodhpur in the early years of the 20th century, where her father worked as a civil servant for the maharaja, Chughtai frames that world and its frequent excesses within a very specific historical tussle of dissimilar political orders—one which espoused a parliamentary, representational form and was seen to be in apparent ascendancy, the politics of the Indian National Congress (established 1885), and another political formation which was notionally centred around a sovereign king and was undergoing a period of upheaval, the regional princely states:

> कांग्रेस का ज़ोर दिन-ब-दिन बढ़ रहा था मगर रियासतों में गांधीजी का नाम भी गुनाह समझा जाता था। हम महाराजा जोधपुर की रिआया थे, उनकी सखावत के बलबूते पर पल रहे थे। पिछले नवंबर में राज कुँवर की सालगिरह हर शहर में बड़ी धूमधाम से मनाई गयी थी। अब्बा मियां ने भी जशन और चिरागां का इंतज़ाम किया था। रात भर बाहर से आये हुए नक्कालों और रंडियों का नाच होता रहा था। हम सबने कचहरी की छत से देखा था सारी रात [The influence of the Congress was increasing day by day but in the princely states, the very name of Gandhiji was a crime. We were the subjects of the maharaja of Jodhpur, we were surviving by his favours and kindness. Last November, the birthday of the royal prince was celebrated with much fanfare in every city. Abba ('father') miyan also organized festivities and lights. Throughout the night, the dancing-girls and the mimickers kept up their dance. All of us saw this all night from the roof of the court] (Chughtai 1998, p. 113).

C.M. Naim makes an argument which is specifically about the consonance of the world of *baazi* with a feudal political order. Writing about the 'pre-modern Urdu poetry' of Mir Taqi Mir (1723–1810), Shah Mubarak Abru (1683/4–1734) and Ghalib (1797–1869), among others, he argues that "the Indo-Muslim milieu of the eighteenth-century Delhi...tolerated homosexuality and did not stigmatize a person merely for his sexual-orientation—so long as that person fulfilled the more important demands of the society, namely an acceptance of, and submission to, its socio-economic hierarchies, and a willingness to perpetuate the same in some measure" (2004b, pp. 19, 39–40). Naim uses a deeply anachronistic vocabulary—*homosexual*, *sexual-orientation*—but his main suggestion stands: that desire between men and boys, the knack for *laundebaazi*, is articulated precisely in its latent compatibility with the contemporary register of political relations in 18th/19th century north India. The Urdu public milieu, Naim contends, showed a "state of *indifference*" (ibid., p. 19, italics in original) or, using Samuel Z. Klausner's phrase, of a "tolerant jocularity" (ibid., p. 20) towards the literary expressions and incidences of desire between men and boys. The poet's own relations and the content of his poetry could substantiate many forms of male desire insofar as it did not violate a reigning political symbolism. Naim writes, a little formulaically perhaps, that the main expressive strand of "[h]omosexual passion in the pre-modern Urdu ghazal remained pederastic—i.e., hierarchical, non-mutual, and controlling—because the milieu's dominant values were of the same nature" (ibid., p. 40).

Such a congruity is evidenced in the fact that the convoluted and usually favouritist relationships within the political ranks could themselves be expressed using a glossary of male-male desire, where male-male sex provides an organising metaphor for political ranks. In 1927, when Ramnath Lal Suman, Ugra's close friend, laments the lack of strong initiative within the *sarkar*, the government, for the reformist task of eradicating

chaklet-panthi—this "disease worse than leprosy" or "these type of evils which are spread in the schools"—he satirises the very bonds between politicians as an elaborate pecking order of *laundebaazi*: "आश्चर्यकी बात है की जब सभी प्रान्तोंके शिक्षा-विभाग भारतीयोंके हाथमें आ गए हैं, इधर प्रांतीय सरकारोंका ध्यान आकर्षित नहीं किया जाता. काउन्सिलके बेचारे 'देशभक्तों' को इतनी फुर्सत कहाँ की अपने घरके बच्चोंकी ओर गौर करें! उन्हें तो नेतापनने खुद अपना 'चाकलेट' बना रखा है" [The surprising thing is that even when the education departments of all the states have come into the hands of the Indians, no one attracts the attention of the State governments towards this. The piteous "patriots" of these councils do not have enough leisure to pay heed to their children in their own homes! They themselves have been made "chaklet" by all this business of politics'] (Suman, 1927, pp. 56–57).

Here in Suman's theatrical language, *laundebaazi* retains its role as a hermeneutic of a wasteful, quasi-feudal political order where the political web, thick with unequal relationships, enervating corruption and power camps, constantly undermines the promise of efficient and impartial governance. Suman is after all offering *laundebaazi* as a viable issue in need of urgent political rallying to a political system that is itself, as he satirically notes, structured by the guiding conceit of *laundebaazi*.

Even Ugra, as he states in the prefatory *kaifiyat* (explanation) to his collection, had offered those short stories as a corrective for male figures around whom social and political respectability usually concentrates: "...समाज के शिक्षालयों, बाल-संस्थाओंके देवताओं की 'ड्यूटी' पर नियुक्त 'कमज़ोर' मनुष्य...दूसरों को उपदेश देनेवाले...आदर्श का नाम लेकर, प्रथा की दोहाई देकर...गंभीरताके कंठ और स्वरसे बोलने वाले महाशय" [those "weak" human beings who are appointed in the educational institutions or in the agencies for our God-like children...those who preach to others.....those who speak in the name of principles and those who cite tradition...those gentlemen who speak seriously] (Ugra 1927b, कैफ़ियत क). Suman's use of *chaklet-panthi* or *laundebaazi* makes explicit its consistently active role as a political metaphor, as can be seen in the genres

of Hindi and Urdu satire, political reportage and pornography (Cohen 1995, 2002). *Laundebaazi* has had an exciting history of being a descriptor, a structure, a metaphor to the political in north India, where the aura of sovereignty and of all-exculpating power always resides in some figures more than others.

The Contemporaneity of *Baazi*

In the year 1997, the Berkeley anthropologist Lawrence Cohen was in Lucknow trying to find more details about the murder of Frederick Gomes, an Anglo-Indian Physical Education instructor and assistant warden at the La Martiniere College, which had taken place on 7 March that year. The 31-year-old bachelor was gunned down early in the morning by two assailants who used a .763 Mauser and a .380 pistol, firing from a window in his room in the school bungalow (Bahal 1997). Investigations by the local police and journalists had opened up a grisly web of political patronage, mafia money, heroin trade, small town gangsters, gun toting 15-year-old Martinians and bureaucratic families wielding influence to hush up the matter (Bahal 1997; Cohen 2002; Pandey 2008).

As a then 12-year-old studying in the seventh grade in the same school, I remember that the murder was shrouded by silence from the school authorities who had wrapped it in formal morning assembly condolences. Among the day-scholars, all sorts of rumors were rife and every boarder spoke as if he had some crucial clue to the mystery. Most of us had been terrified of Gomes, who had recently joined the school, on account of his extreme strictness and the fact that he had the habit of beating boys black and blue on the slightest provocation. In the event of his murder, the young students spun elaborate stories of poetic justice that involved acts of revenge by wronged students and of dangerous connections from Malihabad, a small town in the Lucknow district which, even in the filtered down versions of the 12-year-olds then, was

still notorious for its *dehaati* (rustic) goondas, gang networks and, oddly enough, delicious *dasheri* mangoes.

Unknown to me then, reports of the incident had been immediately syndicated in all the local newspapers and alumni networks and was to be spoken by the Lucknow press as a "sensational killing" or a "much publicized murder" for years after (Pandey 2008; *Times of India* December 2004). Contemporary accounts saw the murder as sullying the legacy of the 152-year-old school which, as "many old students and Lucknow observers" had remarked, was being engulfed by a "'precipitation of accumulated weaknesses' that La Martiniere" had "gradually allowed itself to slither into" (Bahal 1997). This "precipitation of accumulated weaknesses" marked out a dizzyingly complex civics of the region.

All the journalists whom Cohen discussed the matter with framed it within the larger story of "the decline in *political civility* in the state capital," that is, precisely as a question of an avowedly "democratic" political structure at odds with its own theories (Cohen 2002, p. 152, emphasis mine). The journalists' accounts pictured a political setup of Lucknow that was mired in elected politicians with criminal records, the "noxious creeping" influence of the Purabi (eastern Uttar Pradesh) and Bihari *zamindars* (landowners) who were infamous for an indiscriminate sexual rapacity and feudal manners, of political fates that were sealed and undone by the influence of party oligarchs and moneyed mafia, and of Pathan moneylenders and agents from Malihabad who were then taking over the heroin trade in the region and moving into the state capital with their "new money" (ibid., pp. 152–53). "La Martiniere has been affected," a Lucknow journalist Sharma told Cohen, "like everything else" (ibid.).

Cohen had gone to the Lucknow office of the newspaper *The Pioneer* because of a news story that invoked two of his abiding research interests as an anthropologist: the insistence of the feudal figure of the 'sovereign' in modern Indian politics and the idioms of male-male desire in north India:

A variety of theories had surfaced to explain the murder: the teacher was a drug dealer, he was a womanizer, he was involved with unsavory elements that were turning the august school into a den of goondas. All of these were summarized in a headline in *The Pioneer*: "Gomes was a gay." Sharma, the journalist who wrote the story, was poking fun at the profusion of rumors, the teacher's being gay was but the latest feeble attempt to write off the crime (ibid., p. 153).

Cohen's conversation with Sharma, however, cast the joke of the headline as one of the many connected and crucial variants of the murder mystery. "It's Pathans," he told Cohen, "from the town of Malihabad" (Cohen 2002, p. 153). The influence of the Pathans or of the Bihari *zamindar*s that was repeatedly cited as the reason for the deterioration of parliamentary politics in Uttar Pradesh linked figures classically associated with the cultures of *baazi*, and *laundebaazi* in particular, to a state of politics that was 'mixed' at best, and where most politicians' destinies were decided by their ability to manoeuvre a baffling world of non-legal enterprises and methods that usually fell off the radar of legislation by the book. In Sharma's version the sexual excess of the Pathans, "staple of the colonial homoerotic", is intimately related to their role as the political entrenched mafiosi (ibid.). "[T]he once pastoralist Pathans like boys; rising 'goondaism' and homosexuality went hand in hand. Malihabad, Ghazipur, much of Bihar—all these Pathan towns are infamous, and their particular proclivity is spreading as local black money and the drug mafia extend their reach" (ibid.).

Similarly, in the accounts of most of the Lucknow journalists, the *ayyash* (hedonist) Bihari *zamindar* "was marked in his constitution of the sexual object as anything that moved. Women, young men, and the third-gendered *hijras* were all at risk for a hunger framed as sodomitical—*laundebaazi*. History was measured through the corruption of a more courtly sovereignty by such excess" (ibid.). During their meeting at the Pioneer office, Sharma's boss, the editor who had studied sociology from Jawaharlal Nehru University in

Delhi, interrupted their discussion and whisked Cohen away to give him his explanation of such events and practices:

> Don't listen to him...It has nothing to do with Pathans. It's all about land tenure. Look, I'm from Punjab. We don't have that much homosexuality there. Not in West Bengal, either. But in eastern Uttar Pradesh and Bihar, the British land settlement produced relations of extreme bondage and dependency between men, and the result was that this kind of behavior became entrenched as part of the local political life (ibid.).

Cohen admits that he was "intrigued" by the editor's arguments (ibid.). It would be crucial to read these editor's comments in terms slightly different from his own. What is offered as a historical etiology of the greater concentration of "this kind of behavior", of "homosexuality" in some regions (Bihar, eastern Uttar Pradesh) as compared to others (Punjab, West Bengal)—as if it was really *all* about the land tenure or the lack of it—can be read in other terms. First, as evidence of the fact that, in these regions, the "extreme bondage and dependency between men" had historically been known to have a sexual dimension whereby Bihari landowners were and are known to keep *laundas*—boys and young men for sex—a practice that was concomitant with their persona of political authority and excess (ibid.). And second, that the very articulation of this 'local political life' could be done in the terms involving sex between men, whereby male sexual relations acquire the dimensions of an entrenched public political allegory. Political authority could be mobilised in the expressive metaphor of male-male sex. This metaphor is rampant in local circuits of political gossip, in popular terms of abuse, in publications of raunchy political satires like in Benares at the time of the festival of Holi and, though rarely, in local reportage of political events (Cohen 1995, 2002).

The third reading of the editor's comments is about the continuing relevance of colonial historiography in understanding the contemporary political and social contexts in north India. It

is a testament to the present politics' being unmistakably marked by a constant weaving of different political orders that negotiate complex property laws, political fates and systems of cultural and economic patronage in the region. This reading insists on the resoluteness of the so-called pre-modern backward political models and their characteristic features, which are seen as continuing to interact with and inform the modern, democratic political systems. Even in understanding the current, local idioms of *laundebaazi*, Cohen realised, one has to necessarily receive them through "the interpretive frames that give" them "political force" and in doing so one is constantly buffeted by "the figure of kingship"—that figure, often degenerate and excessive, with which descriptions of modern governance often rhetorically establish an oppositional relationship (ibid.).

The picture that the journalists in Lucknow had painted for Cohen in the 1990s presented a conflicted space, where an abstract relationship between a state and its allegedly equal citizens was cut across by a far more fleshly relationship between political camps and communities, between mafia finance, vote bank populations and other conventional bonds of political subjugation (see Chatterjee 2004). The contemporary north Indian political scene, as crystallised in the accounts that Cohen heard, was seen as substantially informed by the principles that lie outside the long hands of the law. As I noted in the earlier section, the idioms of same-sex desire often become metonyms for political orders. Whereas the homosexual has carved a minority niche within representative democratic politics, where classifiably different citizens share a nominal and abstract equality, the *laundebaaz* finds its moorings in the vernacular political cultures of excess, satire, entertainment and unwarranted authority that continue to inform the journalists' perspectives and political contexts that Cohen encountered in Uttar Pradesh. The *homosexual* and the *laundebaaz* are thus political creatures in this deep sense of the term.

Most significantly, since *baazi* is an idiom, a vocabulary, it travels well. It can unhinge itself from context to context and appear as a language used by characters in varied political and social settings.[9] Ugra's characters were after all mostly young teachers and students in urban universities in colonial India, going on to become clerks, teachers and writers. They were not political ministers or princes with vast dominions. *Baazi* or *shauk*, in this sense, has always been a more wide-reaching idiom. Being an idiom, it has travelled well beyond the feudal even as it always continued to cite a form of feudalness in all its travels. The feudal always remains alluded within *baazi*, remains nominal within it. In the Masood Pervez directed Pakistani Punjabi film *Heer-Ranjha* (1970), after taking a swig of *bhang* (hemp drink) sitting in the fields, one rural labourer asks his employer, a small farmer: "*Chacha mainu ai das, ne sadde sharifan nu ai shahi nashe kyoon lagge hain*?" [Uncle, tell me this, how come we simple, respectable people have come to have such royal addictions?] *Baazi* has always toured wide-ranging places, classes and environments. I will end this chapter with a story of *baazi* in a more recent context which attests to the mobility and adaptability of the idiom.

On 18 July 2010, I took a JetLite flight from New Delhi to Lucknow. This was only the second domestic flight I had been able to afford in my 24 years of living in India. After three decades of public sector aviation, the government of India had begun to ease restrictions for private operators by the late 1980s and throughout the 1990s (Mazumdar 2008). In this last decade, a deregulated aviation industry has seen many private and public airlines competing for a growing customer base of fliers among the swelling middle classes in India (Sharma 2007). The low fare phenomenon had altered the demography of fliers in big and small Indian cities, and it was no longer limited to the very rich

[9] I want to thank Francesca Orsini for suggesting this idea to me.

or the political classes. This meant that a more mixed crowd on planes was possible, as was proximity of dissimilar backgrounds, languages and world-views. Two decades ago, I, being from a middle income family would have been as unlikely a domestic passenger as the man I met aboard that day.

Raj Sharma (name changed) was sitting on my window seat when I boarded the aircraft. He smilingly offered his middle seat which I took. He was wearing a quarter sleeved yellow t-shirt, a light blue pair of jeans and a checkered pink and white hand-band. His loud sun glasses were tucked in his collar and his wavy neck-length black hair had dyed streaks of bronze. He had two cell phones, one more expensive than the other, which he refused to switch off during the entire flight, including take-off and landing. He spoke mostly in a laid-back Hindi littered with English words and phrases. Raj was more disarming than the slightly tedious 21-year-old computer engineering student from the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT), Kanpur who sat on my right on the aisle seat and who, as I later discovered, was a few batches junior to me in La Martiniere Boys. Whereas conversations with my schoolmate lasted a few minutes during which he told me how he loves the Vancouver airport and hates London's Heathrow because of its tackiness, my conversations with Raj were not only more exciting but also had a lot to tell me about the current social life of *baazi*.

Raj was 23 and worked as a masseur in Delhi. When I had responded that I had never been to a massage parlour in Delhi, he quickly corrected me. He did not work in *chote*, *gande* (small, dirty) "parlours" but in an Italian company Addiction which, he said, had many branches in Delhi. It was not a small locally-run tacky business, I was told, but an international company that served only classy hotels and commanded more regard. Gesturing towards a white female tourist sitting behind us, he said that he served only foreign girls like her. "*Massage karte hain, to phir agar unko* sex *chahiye hota hai, to phir wo maang lete hain, phir*

paise ki phikar naheen karte, paanch-saat hazaar tak de dete hain" [I do the massage, then if they need sex, they just ask for it, they do not worry about the money, they give even upto 5,000–7,000 rupees]. Every time he leaves Delhi for a day, he told me, he loses at least Rs 8,000 to 10,000 of his massage earnings. Pointing out the Indian female aircrew member, who had earlier curtly asked him to switch off his phone, he said that "*yeh toh* smell *kartee hongi…aisi toh mere paas bahut hain wahan*" [this sort must surely smell, I have a whole lot like them in Delhi]. In the middle of this conversation, I had asked Raj whether he massaged "gents" as well. He had looked at me funny and said "*wo shauk mujhe naheen hai*" [I do not have that interest]. His company, he said, had male masseurs for female clients and vice versa. I said that I heard of male masseurs who served male clients and same for women. He did not pick up the hint.

Raj said that he was going to meet his girlfriend in Lucknow who he visits about four times a month. He quickly showed me her photographs on his costlier cell phone. The girl, he said, was in love with him and had been trying to avoid marriage by pretending to limp or stutter in front of boys with whom her family tried to arrange her match. As he rolled from one photo to another on his cell phone, the girl in the pictures did not remain the same. He kept up his commentary, telling me that he also had four to five girlfriends in Delhi. From his earnings as a masseuse, he had bought a flat in Pitampura in north-west Delhi and a Hyundai car. Girls flocked to him, he said, while he showed me several pictures of him and them in various states of undress in his flat and in the car. He goes out a lot in Delhi, he said, "*bahut kharche ho jaate hain Dilli mein, bas* club-*vab*" [I end up splashing a lot of money in Delhi, just clubs] and went on to mention several discotheques in three or four star Delhi hotels as his favorite haunts. It was in this context of self-avowed excesses that he first brought to work the idiom of *baazi*. Talking of his life in the city, he said, "*kabhi phone karke aayega to dikhaayenge aapko dilli ki badhiya* life, clubs *aur*

ladkibaazi' [if you call me sometime and come, then I will show you the good life in Delhi, clubs and fun with girls].

Raj had first come to Delhi when he was seven years old. His parents in his native town Azamgarh in eastern Uttar Pradesh had wanted him to sit in the local general stores to make a small living. He migrated to Delhi instead with a family relative. Now, he told me with an unmistakable pride, his whole family depended on him. He had singlehandedly arranged the money for the marriage of his five sisters and had bought some land for his family in Azamgarh.[10] His dream, he said, was to return to his native town once in a helicopter so that the social status of his parents would irreversibly shoot up. I asked him about where he got such an idea. He told me "Amitabh Bacchan *ke paas apna* helicopter *hai*, *kuch* style *hota hai*, *aur vaise bhi* helicopter *sabko thodi hi milta hai*, *sirf kuch* military *ya* government *waalon ko*, *ya koi bahut ameer ho toh*' [Amitabh Bhacchan has his own helicopter, that is some style, and anyway, not everyone can get a helicopter, it is given only to a few in the military and in the government, or if you're very rich]. It is in this context of his dreams, now realisable not only through public sector institutions like the government or the military but also through freely expendable private capital, that Raj used the idiom of *baazi* for the second and last time in our conversations. Talking of the helicopter landing in his native town Azamgarh, he said, "*isse hamari showbaazi ho jayegi*" [with this, we can show off in a big way]. *Showbaazi* means to show off habitually, being addicted to it, to-consume while they look.

Baazi is used to talk about perceptions of excess, whether it is the promiscuous affairs with girls or whether it is the blatant performance of consumption in one's social circles. This excess is not premised on some static feudal economic arrangements

[10] Raj had asked me how much I would earn when I would become a teacher at Delhi University after completing my doctoral thesis. I gave him an estimate of anywhere between Rs 30,000 to 40,000 per month. He looked a little sorry on my behalf and continued with his stories.

but instead is driven by the post-liberalisation version of the free market with all its staple constituents—advent of international companies, migratory labour force from smaller cities, a more mobile capital and a mounting impetus in the media towards practices of conspicuous consumerism. Raj's stories, however, are possible only at the cusp of individual, anonymised freedom in the city and a more embedded, responsible social role in the native family town. His tales materialise somewhere in the middle of free expenditure on one's own person, as individual choice in the free market and primacy of free capital, and a more *foreseen* sort of expenditure on the larger joint family in the home town, as predicated on ideas of domicile, primacy of land and of long-standing family connections. *Baazi* cites this mixed, knotty economy—it is mobilised by its contradictions.

In all these stories, was Raj's wife. She, I was told, lived in Azamgarh with his family and knew nothing of his girlfriends, his sex work or club outings. He had married when he was 19 and she was slightly younger. She rarely goes out of the house, he said, and if she does, she is always accompanied by her brother-in-law and parents. He said that he almost never took her out, "*bas kabhi-kabhaar mele mein, wo bahut* simple *hai, shaukeen naheen hai*" [just sometimes for the fair, she is very simple, she is not too fond of things']. Raj's stories about *baazi* seemed to be predicated on series of asymmetries between him and his wife—about who is more wont to be excessive in a heavily gendered political economy; who can afford, both socially and financially, to be *shaukeen*, to have colourful habits; and who is more mobile out of the domestic household to lay claim to bigger cities and their new, anonymised freedoms.

Baazi accommodates itself to the demands and conditions of the multifaceted post-liberalisation world and its unique inequalities and opportunities. It continues to cite the *feudalness* of its long historical associations but in modified ways. The new rich and the consuming middle classes are cast as the emergent nobility in the free market, with industrial giants, corporate

connected film stars and airline honchos as their kingpins, regularly making appearances on corporate-owned Hindi and English media channels. This class and its constant televised feting informs Raj's dreams of helicopters, four star clubs, costly mobile phone, girls and cars, many of which lie within his reach. These join the list of the *shahi nashe*, royal habits. The feudalness of *baazi* is simultaneously sustained and disenchanted by the new gentry made possible in transformed economies. As an idiom, it makes space within these new hierarchies and aspirations. As with *gaybaazi* mentioned in the introduction, the register of *baazi* persists, always renovating its references, shifting but consistently embedded within the contemporary.

3

On PlanetRomeo

Indian Men as Gay, as Lovers, as Friends[1]

In this chapter, I look at Planet Romeo (hereafter PR), a transnationally used 'gay' dating website to explore the idioms through which Indian users navigate it and how they initiate and inhabit various kinds of intimacies on this platform. As I read thousands of users' profiles over a period of about 2 years, it became evident that their desires, vocabularies and self-images cannot be unpacked using any single idiom, even if the creators of the website primarily transact in the idiom of gay and make this fairly central to their web content and design. I noted a certain nimbleness in the users who condensed themselves to particular categorical idioms of same-sex desire during sign-up procedures, but went beyond these idioms within their actual profile texts, pictures and online interactions where they mixed and matched idioms in an erratic fashion. What finally emerged from my analysis of the online space was a constellation of interrelated and yet separately recognisable idioms such as that

[1] All user quotations, unless otherwise mentioned, are from the website www.planetromeo.com (PR), accessed between October 2009 and January 2010. Usernames have been changed for the purposes of anonymity.

of friendship, of love and of the gay scene.[2] In this chapter, I explore these idioms separately, evoking their interconnections and emphasising their internal contradictions.[3]

A small part of the story of PR begins in London. In 2002 a young German man comes to stay in the city and, like most urban migrants, tries to find new networks of friends and lovers for some "good times" and "high jinks" (see 'About Us', PR). He finds that the quickest and most undemanding way to search for other men "of his ilk" was the internet (ibid.). Soon enough, he sets about trying his glass slipper on every Cinderella in town who's logged in.

A few days into it, however, he faces a problem. He finds that most dating portals, apart from being difficult to navigate, weigh

[2] Each idiom of same-sex desire, here on PR as elsewhere, works like a "scene of language", akin to how Roland Barthes defines what he calls a "[f]igure" that "take[s] shape insofar as we can recognize, in passing discourse, something that can be read, heard, felt. The figure is outlined (like a sign) and memorable (like an image or a tale)" (Barthes 1978, p. 4). It is "established if at least someone can say: 'That's so true! I recognize that scene of language'" (ibid.). For instance, 'I love you' as a phrase is a scene of language which mobilizes and sustains a situation of romance (ibid., pp. 3–6). The scene of language of the 'friend', or the idiom of friendship, would open up an entire arena that, apart from its contiguity to the other idioms of love and gayness, could by itself invoke the intimacy of the *dost*, the playfulness of the *yaar*, the togetherness of the *companion*, the casualness of the *buddy*, the longevity of the *humsafar* (the one who journeys with you) and the sensitivity of the *mitr*. Idioms always mobilise a cluster of related signs that affect each other without collapsing into each other. Desire between men on PR is expressed, enacted and fulfilled through irregular strings of such idioms that both aid and obstruct each other. As argued in the Introduction, not one of these idioms could lay claim to being more authentic or truthful than the other; instead, as malleable and fluid scenes in language, they occur as so many shifting constellations.

[3] Even as PR might allow us to see the dizzying complexity of the idioms of desire used by several same-sex desiring self-identified men and *kothi/hijra*/MTF (Male to Female) trans* folks, it must be acknowledged that this chapter, by limiting its focus to PR, tells us nothing of the equally complex array of idioms of desire used by same-sex desiring self-identified women and FTM (Female to Male) trans* folks in India.

heavily on his pockets. He has to shell out a few extra pounds every time to avoid the abrupt closure of online chats. By the early 2000s, the same time as he began his searches, online dating/romance had become a big business; American consumers alone were spending close to USD 500 million on personal/dating content in 2003, up by nearly 50 per cent from the year before (Mapes 2004).

Our protagonist's problem is not surprising. It is a part of what had been noted by Saskia Sassen at the turn of the 21st century—that the internet, in its brief history, has already entered a fourth phase organised mainly under the category of e-commerce. Most of the internet's backbone softwares are now chiefly linked to billing, identity-verification and trademarks protection (Sassen 2000, p. 583).

Our lad's money crunch had given him an idea. In the spring of 2002, Jens chose to ride the e-market wave and started a website with Manuel, a friend/business partner, that aimed to relocate a section of the prolific urban escort/client trade from adult magazines' back pages on to the web. This website was named Erados.com (now fully integrated into PR). Cobbling together the programme codes from this website, Jens and Manuel sprung the first version of 'GayRomeo', a 'gay' dating website, by October that year ('About Us', PR). Before the year had ended, "the good old gay grapevine" had worked and there were already 3,000 free registered users (ibid.).

Over the next few years, the website moved its offices from London to a little room in a backyard of a building in Friedrichshain in Berlin and to more roomy quarters in the "wild, wild" east side of the city by 2004 (ibid.). By the means of a chargeable Plus account, over and above the usual free user account, money had begun to flow in and the website, now a limited company, grew both in number of users and reach. However, the strict provisions of the German Act for the Protection of Young Persons and Minors, which effectively required that every user be personally verified through rigorous identificatory softwares like PostIdent or Schufa (the

German credit protection agency) meant that either GayRomeo had to close shop or remove all its users' hardcore photos. This personalised checking was both expensive and complicated. The company chose a third option and, in the summer of 2006, happily exiled itself to Amsterdam where the courts were lax.

In March 2009, by which time GayRomeo (by then called Planetromeo) had more than 900,000 profiles from just about every country on the planet, it chose the familiar corporate strategy of merger to expand its business. Merging guys4men that was already popular in Asia and America, with PR that hoarded most of the European "gay internet sector" (PlanetRomeoBlog [now defunct] 2009), meant that it became the biggest portal online for men seeking out other men for friendship, sex or romance (see Figure 3.1).

Figure 3.1
PlanetRomeo homepage

PLANETROMEO
English (English)
Home
Help & Service
About us
Users
Guide
Clubs
Escorts
User Login
Profile Name
Password
As last time
Remember Me
G-Rated
Login
Forget Password?
Activate SSL
Welcome to our Community
81,236 Users online now
Register here for free »
Absolutely free of charge
+ Unlimited messages
+ Unlimited profile viewing
+ Link friends to your profile
+ Powerful user search
+ Up to 25 Profile Pics
+ Storage for 60 users
+ And much more!
Friendship & Love
We cater for that too. We host thousands of special interest clubs – anything from sport, art, hobbies, culture and fetish through to a huge range of whatever turns you on.
Hot guys for a hot date
Looking for a no-strings number to make it through the night? Whatever your expectations are you're bound to find satisfaction right here in our pages.
Why we're different
Even today it's still run and managed by a decidedly gay team. We're certainly not above making the occasional cock-up. But what we do do is work together with our users to build a place where everybody feels at home.

Note the invocation of the sense of communal belonging in "[w]elcome to our community" and "[e]ven today it's still run and managed by a decidedly gay team…what we do is work together with our users to build a place where everybody feels at home" knowing fully well that different users will have different expectations from and participation in this "community".

As of the beginning of 2010, there were about 50,000 Indian user profiles hosted on the website. This short history of PR is already a deeply transnational one. It sets the rhetorical stage for the projection of a worldwide "genuine gay community", a phrase that the PR team constantly uses in its publicity material whereby it proposes a deep affective resonance of the idiom of gayness among people all around the world. As I shall show in this chapter, this resonance is both intensified and interrupted by the real-time users of the website who also use several other idioms of same-sex desire.[4] I will now elaborate on some of those idioms that I found to be most used by Indians on PR—that of the gay scene, that of love (*pyaar*, *ishq*) and of friendship (*dosti*, *masti*).[5]

[4] The internet is a particularly interesting and unique site for the experiment between these idioms, considering that the internet as a form seems to embody and allow for a principle of unrationalised contiguities between different knowledges, the principle whereby you can reach, at least theoretically, anywhere from anywhere. The scholarly understandings of the internet itself vacillate between giving it the extremes of form and formlessness. In this literature, the internet seems to have a dual status—it is at once a patchwork of simple screens but it is also an elaborate state of the connection of user-end machines, of weightless signals travelling, of physically located servers that can be touched, and of programming codes and hardware equipment managing these many dynamic, transnational situations of connection. The internet is at once a simple webpage and a "dynamic condition" (Sassen 2000, p. 590), "a decentralized network of networks" (ibid., p. 583). Such a form becomes a particularly amenable site for the confusions and convergences between the many idioms of same-sex desire that I study in this book.

[5] A short list of these idioms would include the friend, the lover, the *mast* (playful), the homosexual, the gay man, the femme, the trans, the top and the bottom. A long list would also include the fit guy, the gym-bodied, the *kothi*, the *decent*, the uncle, the twink, the *chakka*. An even longer list would index the moustachioed, the faker, the *shayar* (poetic), the chubby, the *dilwala* (with heart), the Romeo, the oldie, the amateur and so on.

IDIOMS ON PR: GAY SCENE[6]

Just when the caterpillar thought the world was over it became a butterfly / i am here to meet people be with them and be my self chill over a cup of coffee or roll in bed .....important part is that to be with *the gay world*.....Mummmmmmmmah (gingernut, Pune; PR, emphasis mine)

In his essay 'Capitalism and Gay Identity', John D'Emilio considers sexual identities not as inner truths but as sums of the ways in which we arrange our lives in relation to our desires. Industrial capitalism, according to D'Emilio, ushered new conditions of arrangement of the category of life. With the withering away of the family as an independent unit of production, it became necessary and possible for men (and less so for women) to move out of their places of origin to new places of employment. This was the reality triggered by the rise of capitalist wage labour.

> Only when *individuals* began to make their living through wage labour, instead of as parts of an interdependent family unit, *was it possible for sexual desire to coalesce into a personal identity—an identity based on the ability to remain outside the heterosexual family and to construct a personal life based on attraction to one's own sex* (1983, pp. 104–05; emphasis mine).

In 20th century America, D'Emilio observed that men increasingly found themselves away from their family, living alone, in hostels, in same-sex dormitories and same-sex places of work. They also found a category of leisure time that could be spent outside the family based on individual inclinations. These were decidedly new conditions and possibilities of socialisation. Of the people erotically interested in their own sex, some gravitated towards each other and began to entertain ideas—even if inconsistent and haphazard—of a group life. "Already, in the early twentieth century, large cities contained male homosexual bars"

[6] Related idioms are the scene-queen, the gay boy, the consumer, the community, the online user, the activist.

(ibid., p. 105). Riverside Drive in New York City and Lafayette Park in Washington became cruising grounds for men. Specific places brimmed with codes of possibility for men to meet other men. "Public bathhouses and YMCAs became gathering spots" (ibid.). Around 1955, Del Martin and Phyllis Lyon founded the San Francisco group 'Daughters of Bilitis' for women who desired women, noting that "[w]omen needed privacy…not only from the watchful eye of the police, but from gaping tourists in the bars and from inquisitive parents and families back home" (quoted in Meeker 2006, p. 77). "Simultaneously," D'Emilio writes,

> ideological definitions of homosexual behavior changed. Doctors developed theories about homosexual*ity*, describing it as a condition, something that was inherent in the person, a part of his or her "nature". These theories did not represent scientific breakthroughs, elucidations of previously undiscovered areas of knowledge; *rather, they were an ideological response to* [a] *new way of organizing one's personal life*. The popularization of the medical model, in turn, affected the consciousness of the women and men who experienced homosexual desire, so that they came to define themselves through their erotic life (D'Emilio 1983, p. 105, emphasis in original).

Even if we disregard D'Emilio's absolute prioritisation of the external socio-economic processes, in relation to which he sees medical theories only as "an ideological response", what is interesting for us here is that these external processes were not incidental but constitutive of the articulation of specific sexual identities. That the very possibility of becoming a part of a scene intimately informed the personal identities which would be articulated. In this section on the idiom of the 'gay scene', I will see how identifications as 'gay' are actually lived out and staged rhetorically within the imagination of this 'scene', where such identifications are always inconsistent and contingent on several factors that could often be unrelated to sexuality.

D'Emilio's essay moved away from psychoanalytical theories of sexuality. His early respondents were clear that his perpective

was very different from American thinkers like Adrienne Rich who "argue[d] for a profound lesbian identity, one forged in the ties of infancy" and who separated "this 'lesbian existence' from the evolution of a gay male life which she [saw] as anomic and very far from nuturant" (Snitow, Stansell and Thompson 1983, p. 100). D'Emilio, they argued, "would no doubt disagree from... [Rich's] claim of historical discontinuity between gay men and lesbians, since...he sees the creation of the 'homosexual' of either sex as a specific, modern phenomenon. Lesbians, he argues, were rarer presences in the 'male space' of streets, parks and bars because of women's continued economic dependence on men. It was economic oppression, not a more caring nature, he implicitly argues, that kept them more quietly at home" (ibid.).

The clauses important for D'Emilio are not inner or physiological factors, those which sustain the alleged psychoanalytical or bodily make-up of the homosexual woman or man. Instead of the big players like the unconscious, "the ties of infancy", or the primal memories of childhood which might leave a lasting imprint on an individual and determine her sexuality, D'Emilio's field has different criteria. He looked at external economic processes, distance from family and new spaces for socialisation as especially conducive to the adoption of gay and lesbian identities within rhetorical narratives of self-advancement and self-realisation.

Taking a cue from D'Emilio, I argue in this section that gay as lived within the idiom of the gay scene does not simply work as a condition of one's being, or as a name for this condition; instead, it also works like an imaginative gesture to participate in group situations. Here it is not a wholesale adoption but a more provisional plugging-in, an unstable sign insisting on togetherness, be it in events, in locations or in lifestyles that provide opportunities to meet other men. The gesture implicit in g*ay* would then *link* people as much as it would *tag* them. The *gay scene* as a common urban idiom works as a shorthand for an array of experiences, practices of consumption, dynamic locations

and fitful memories. It is not simply there but is imagined into being. When discotheques organising gay nights and websites advertising gay dating, when pride marches voicing gay rights and salons servicing gay people are frequently heard about or lived out, when they begin to sediment into people's imagination, when they trigger a template of wonderful and terrible experiences, a peculiar world begins to take shape. In these experiences the word 'gay' worlds itself, it begins to accrue a recognisable (because consistent) set of urban references. This invoked world, this idiom of the gay scene becomes at once a wonderland calling for exploration, a butt of regrets, and a dreamland of possibilities.

We will see how PR users articulate this gay scene into being. Every online utterance about this scene supplies it with a cumulative set of characteristics. These utterances are, most commonly, made at the gateways of this scene by those people who are either new to it, by those dissatisfied with it or by those who feel they cannot or do not want to be a part of it. It is at these many thresholds of the scene that its descriptions occur. A definition is best garnered at its edges, at the points of entry and departure. The scene itself is not "an unproblematically verifiable social entity but...a rhetorical construction, produced...through a number of key spatial tropes as location, home, stage" arrival and leave taking (Payne 2007).

For the new, it is almost always a space of unbridled promise and a little hesitation. Here, "the scene is figured as destination—a place of arrival and welcome" (ibid.). phoenix382, from Ahmedabad writes on his profile on PR: "visiting for a few days / excited. is there a gay scene in Ahmedabad—help a tourist find the right places". The gay scene is clearly an urban imaginary composed of a theoretically limited number of "right places". The scene then has to be a shifting set of directions practically pointing to such places. Here the scene becomes a marketable touristic vision of the city ("help a tourist find the right places"), appearing in an exemplary way in the genre of travel guides like

the *Lonely Planet* or the *Spartacus Gay Guide*. For instance, the Spartacus hotel guide for gay men responded to the July 2009 Delhi High Court judgement by noting the overhaul in the *scene*: "India's newly emerging LGBT communities," it said, "along with changing gay scene in larger cities such as Delhi is an exciting development…gay nights are becoming more and more popular in several discos and bars" ('India' at spartacusworld; accessed January 2011).

PR user Manchanda (name changed) from Raipur in Chhattisgarh does not point us yet to those proverbial "right places" but elaborates on this *scene as a series of expectations*. Setting himself up as an amateur on the scene, he writes:

> Hi friends, a new kid on the block in the gay scene is here, i am 19, fresh, raring to go; i am seeking to be a model, but first i want to be a good human being, god gave me looks and i am thankful for that, but definitely not proud of that as it says beauty lies…I am a very fun loving and warm hearted person. Hope i get good friends through this site Thanks for reading my profile. Hey i also wanna add sex seekers, i wanna b polite to u, but i m not ur cup of tea. My fave Quotation is… The woods are lovely, dark, and deep, / But I have promises to keep, / And miles to go before I sleep, / And miles to go before I sleep. / Robert Frost. [pulitzer prize winning american poet] / I hope u liked it too, it touches me as many times as i read (PR, ellipsis and brackets in original)

The gay scene is expected to be a substantive meeting space ("hope I get good friends") and the website which assists in such meetings, even enacts them, is always already a part of this scene ("hope I get good friends through this site"). Manchanda's interrupted prose is full of expectations and it works as a clumsy signpost for the scene. It is where he expects friendships to materialise, which is why he indulges in the common tactics of the 'personal ad' where you describe yourself, your interests and ambitions, give your favorite quotations, etc., that is, you set yourself up as a script awaiting perusal and hopefully interest

and compatibility. This is also a space where he expects he might run into "sex seekers" who are an integral part of Manchanda's imagination of the scene and are precisely what he wants to avoid—the scene as reckless, to be manoeuvred by restraint, the scene as a bunch of invitations and rejections. The words of the new always prefigure a peculiar world through their expectations. The scene is what they *expect* into being. The scene as a set of dreams.

Manchanda is self-avowedly "a new kid on the block" and is yet to set his expectations at the altar of experience. It might be interesting to shift to the profiles of the self-avowedly experienced, even the disgruntled, for understanding the alleged "right places" of the scene, places that both invite and repulse, that accommodate you but often also tacitly disqualify. The scene as the shattering or realisation of dreams.

I cite three PR users at that particular moment when they try to describe this scene. Kamal09 from Hyderabad associates the scene with a few set leisure locations even as he distances himself from them. "Just a simple guy," he calls himself, who is "here looking forward to chat with people. not much into gay scene. so please don't try to invite me to gay pubs or parties. i do have a good group of people where i can go and enjoy ...u know what i mean." Rony2009 from Bangalore prefigures the scene as a place for muscular male bodies primed in the gym and sustained under the sign of fitness as *bon sens*, the sign of muscle as beauty; "[t]he gay scene is good for some people but not for me...I am not into muscles, although I like the gym, sensible walking shoes, although I see why they make sense." Yourboy from Bangalore writes that he does "like to go out with mates for dinners, drink or even clubbing", but that he is "not much of a scene queen at all, lol!" He adds that he prefers "straight clubs to gay clubs... they tend to be less seedy! (And tend not to stink of urine so much...lol!) But yeh, do go out to gay scene from time to time. Also like nights in at home on the sofa in front of the television."

Peter Jackson studies the structural conditions of the possibility of international urban "gay capitals" and it is no coincidence that their primary condition is that of a well-entrenched market economy. "Research on global queering," he says, "has concentrated on cities that, in popular gay parlance, are called 'gay capitals'—Amsterdam, London, Paris, Berlin, New York, San Francisco, Rio de Janeiro, Sydney, Bangkok, and Tokyo—all of which are in countries with long histories of market economies" (2009, p. 370). "A gay capital," he argues, "is a metropolis commonly regarded to be the first site of the emergence of new male homosexual identities and cultures in a particular region. It is a city with the largest commercial gay scene in a region, a site for homosexual in-migration" (ibid.).

In the three citations, from Rony, Kamal and Yourboy, the gay scene begins to assume a limited, coherent set of meanings in sync with this market economy. Its meanings depend on a burgeoning middle class with increasing spending power in a liberalised market. The rhetorical centre of this scene is often a muscular, affluent, English-speaking gay man who frequents urban gay-exclusive spaces with ease. The gay scene itself is a market-friendly phenomenon. It works as an urban constellation of related acts of consumption. It relies on "the so-called gay marketing moment, when 'coming out' meant coming out in terms of purchasing power" (Puar 2002, p. 104).

Paul Birrell of Pride London, the commercial body that organises the annual pride marches in London, makes clear how embedded gay scenes and their expressions are in local urban businesses. The 2009 July London Pride's titular message was 'Come and play'. A more "politicised" message, Birrell said, was avoided due to conditions of local sponsorship. "If we were heavily politicised," he said, "there's no way we would be in Oxford Street and Regents Street. The traders wouldn't want it and they have a lot of clout with the council, but when they can see it attracts people into the city, they're happy" (quoted in

McVeigh 2009). *Come and play* is a teasing variation of *come and spend*. It is a transformed version of gay politics where the strategy of visibility, articulated most strongly in the 1960s/70s moment of gay liberation in western Europe and the United States, has increasingly come to mean visible consumption in the city. The very word 'scene' is "more appropriate to the *worldliness* of a subculture that participates in a global capitalist economy and is open to global influences" (Gelder 2005, p. 9, emphasis mine).

Rony, Kamal and Yourboy each have peculiar relationships with this scene. Crucially enough, no one is ever fully at the centre of this scene, its full participant. The ultimate scene-queen remains a rhetorical device. They set themselves up at different distances from the scene and the acts of consumption it entails. Each of them is at a tangent to it. Similarly, PR user True_Companion from Bombay says, "[a]s for me, I love music, reading, spending time outside of the 'gay scene', and hanging out with my close friends. I enjoy just simple pleasures in life—a movie, a good dinner…life doesn't have to be extravagant—although occasionally that is nice to splurge on" (PR). The scene is never a simple object of participation for *all* users. It is always an object of reflection, a reflection that is structurally a distancing manoeuvre. These distances are variously elaborated as choice, as distribution of personal time *outside* and *inside* the scene, as pure inability to be in it or as sour dissatisfaction with it.

Ken Gelder, in elaborating the history of subcultural studies in Euro-American scholarship since the early 1940s, makes a significant remark about how people always inhabit subcultures in an uneven way. If subcultures are, in some loose sense, about thinking about one's group identity as different from an imagined norm, then these differences never take one form and are never valued or adopted consistently. They are at once bemoaned, relished and exploited by its participants (Gelder 2005, p. 1). Subcultures can never become wholly discrete entities for its members to inhabit (ibid., p. 8). Gelder argues that the point

of inhabiting a subculture is already a point of its leakage. In elaborating on the Californian sociologist John Irwin's 1977 book *Scenes*, which first introduced this term as a cultural analytic, Gelder argues that "[o]ne's attachment to scenes can stem from choice rather than predicament; relations to them may be 'casual' rather than complete or permanent; they may change routinely, but they can also 'overlap' so that one's social identity can be associated with a *number* of scenes rather than just one" (ibid., 11; emphasis in original).

There is no one patent relationship with the scene. There are always inconsistent and jagged lines of discontinuity between the imagined subcultural world and its participants. In talking about the "gay world", Delhi PR user not_intrested marks his relationship with the scene with a streak of mordancy: "[i]n D City Of Sex Don't Expect Love. If U R Expecting...Get Prepared With Some Hanky Nd Tissues...Coz Gay World Is Face World. Here Relation n Ppl Get Changed Like Clothes. U Wear Dem Or Remove Dem Upto U..." (PR). Similarly, vviisshhaall from Bombay articulates his specialised relationship with the scene. "Please note," he says, "Im looking forward to have discreet friendship with only good looking and closet gays or bisexual guys...so, feminine guys, and the ones who are openly gay, very much into the gay scene, belonging to gay groups and attending gay parties...pls pls pls excuse me, bcoz we wont gel together" (PR). For vviisshhaall, the scene is cast by too much *openness* and by a peculiar masculinity which calls attention to itself, which catches the eye and does not pass. He relates to this overbearing scene by making demands of discreteness from its members, by excusing himself from those who cannot. The entry to the scene is always necessarily partial.

It is clear that gay as a scene or as an identity is never occupied simply or steadily over time by people. Gay is not a permanent name but a series of situations. It is an object of a wavering relationship. It is always an inconsistent contract of belonging

through consumption, through experiencing togetherness in and outside consumption. It is constantly reimagined over time, rehashed by experience and reflected upon in casual or serious, delighted or dissatisfied online exchanges. PR is the place of this wavering relationship—being its trigger point—and the very form that this relationship takes.

IDIOMS ON PR: LOVER[7]

> We duly felt the right anguishes
> (Fowles 1966, p. 17).

Kumar (name changed), a 27-year-old from Delhi, takes recourse to a popular clichī related with love. He launches his profile with a slightly impish line: "Do you believe in love at first sight or should i walk by again…:-)". The idea of love at first sight is integral to the modern idea of romance. It is always a moment of revelation of everything special in the other and it always prefigures a shared future with this other. It is a hugely loaded moment saturated with expectation and a formally religious belief—Kumar specifically asks "[d]o you believe…?"—in its ability to reveal a lot in a little time. It is above all a narrative device that is crucial to the modern plot of romance, being as it is more often than not a retrospective utterance used to hold together a narrative.

Anthony Giddens locates the rise of the idea of romantic love with the rise of the genre of the novel in the late 18th/19th century in Europe (1993, p. 40). "[T]he connection," he says "was one of newly discovered narrative form" (ibid.). This new literary narrativisation of love was embedded in the social and legal changes of the 19th century, particularly of women staking

[7] Related idioms are the friend, the poet, the narrator, the *mehboob*, the *kaatil*, the romancer, the online user, the consumer, the compatible, the *premi*.

greater claims to rights over their own life and its choices, such as reproduction, career and marriage, making individual life into something that could be owned and manoeuvred like one's own story (Giddens 1993, pp. 1–3). Romantic love, he argues, makes of passionate attachments or moments of attraction something that is uniquely projectionable into an individual's future; "[s]uch love projects in two senses: it fastens upon and idealizes another, and it projects a course of future development" (ibid., p. 45).

Love at first sight functions as the launching action in this narrative course. As part of the romantic plot, it always has to overwork its capacities than just an independent moment of attraction; "[i]nsofar as immediate attraction is part of romantic love...it has to be separated quite sharply from the sexual/erotic compulsions of passionate love. The 'first glance' is a communicative gesture, an intuitive grasp of qualities of the other. It is a process of attraction to someone who can make one's life, as it is said, 'complete'" (ibid., p. 40). The first meeting might be a capturing of the heart, but it is almost always framed as the beginning of a mutual narrative biography of the romantic pair (ibid., p. 46).

Romantic love is always composed of the secular and the sacred interrupting each other. "[T]he more I live, the more I think / two people together is a miracle" (Rich 1976, poem XVIII). "Or in this poem, [t]here are no miracles...[i]f I could let you know...two people together is a work / heroic in its ordinariness" (ibid., poem XIX). The 18-year-old PR user tman3108 from Chandigarh reposes a degree of expectation habitually invested in the first meeting: "im a fun guy n wanna meet someone cute with a good personality...if you're him...lets meet n *see if there's a spark*....' (emphasis mine). This first sight carries the baggage of its possible revelatory function—at its core a sacred function—and this always yields peculiar metaphors of chance such as *spark*. The possibility of love is always latent in the first sight but it will not always come through. There is a necessarily aleatory (because

always unpredictable) connection between the first sight and the possibility of durable love that it is supposed to trigger.

Like with the Biblical God's grace in 16th century European Calvinist interpretations, some are predestined to be received into God's favour and others are not (Calvin 1536). Human beings can never know who the chosen ones are so all must necessarily continue to believe in divine munificence. This essential and canonical impossibility of human pre-knowledge shapes the Christian sacred traditions with the maxim that only God foreknows everything and that there is always a need to believe in his kindness.

It is in this sense that romantic love never becomes a fully secular feeling in terms of form because there always has to be an element of belief that has to compensate for the chance element of first meetings and invoke tentative, desired futures out of the exigencies of the present moment. "In short, *whatever happens*, knowing that it is ordered by the Lord, he will receive it…" (Calvin 1536, Book 3, Chapter 7, emphasis mine). Belief is always a way to override chance by plotting it in a causal narrative, even if the cause is usually the grace of the primal divine or the happening of love. Here, "[r]omantic love," treated as a causing agent, makes of "*amour passion* [passionate love] a specific cluster of beliefs and ideals geared to transcendence" (Giddens 1993, p. 45), that is, to a projected longevity of the romantic connection. "Love is never wanting to lose faith, never wanting to give up, and never truly moving on" (Sam2007, New Delhi, PR). Romantic love, formally similar to religious faith, becomes a "potential avenue for controlling the future, as well as a form of psychological security (in principle) for those whose lives are touched by it" (Giddens 1993, p. 41).

The spark, in the wide ranging aleatory metaphors of online users, variously reincarnates in popular PR bywords such as chemistry, tuning, clicking together, special, our wavelengths, gelling, etc. The first sight of the romantic other is prearranged

like an epiphany, expected like a sacred appearance. Romantic love is often framed as the only possibility of a miracle *in* the modern secular realist universe in which it is plotted. It perseveres as such *despite* this emplotment within a generically realist–causal framework which treats this miracle as a bit of a joke—Kumar's 'do you believe…or should i walk by again'. love_forever23, from Pune, hooks himself on to the paradox implicit in Kumar's joke, the paradox between the realist uncertainty of this miracle of first sight and of a sacred belief in it. "*Kab kaun kaha kis tarah pasand aajaye*," he says, "*aur wo hamari* life *ka sabse* special person *ban jaye pata hi nahin chalta*…I know *mere liye bhi koi hai aisa*" [Who knows, sometime, somewhere, we might begin to like someone and he might become our life's most special person…I know there is someone like this for me] (PR). *Who knows* and *I know* coexist in the modern concept of romantic love.

Chatterjee (name changed) from Hooghly in West Bengal rehearses the common wisdom of over-aphoristic greeting cards when he writes: "its not miracle to make good friend but its miracle to have a friend who will b wid u *always*" (PR, emphasis mine). The real miracle of the first sight was never simply the promise of love but of its longevity, the promise of the many sights after the first. Writing at the end of the century of the novel in Europe, Oscar Wilde had felt the pulse of this widespread, allegedly ridiculous belief in the miracle of romantic love understood as long narrative, understood as a matter of always. A belief which the long and realist form of the novel fed into and ordinarized in its non-epic, bourgeois protagonists, even as it implicitly questioned it by placing it within the everyday conflicts and interruptions staple of the narrative form. *In narrative* lay the realist inconsistencies of love. However, precisely *in narrative* lay the sacred seduction that these inconsistencies might continue. "Always! That is a dreadful word," Wilde wrote through his character Henry Wotton, "[t]hey spoil every romance by trying to make it last forever" (Wilde 1890, p. 18). Romantic love, in

terms of the modern novel form, works as a promise of a shared, durable narrative. Something that would not be warranted by passionate enthrallment of the extraordinary epic kind, or in sexual attraction by itself.

The modern premise of this faith in the miracle of love is not any divine promise, immutable kinship structure or continued sexual attraction but the more secular 'qualities' of the individual other, such as intelligence, personal style or career prospects. Each person looking for love is individualised as a unique string of these qualities. "Am handsome, intelligent, career oriented, stylish, gym toned and single. Seek d same" (chiseled, Bombay, PR). Love, and the pervasive search for it, has become a more individuating phenomenon in the last two centuries culminating in the self-oriented genre of the user profile on dating websites like PR. I explain the history of this individuation with the case of the modern Bengali novel.

In attempting to write a "history of love" for South Asia, Sudipta Kaviraj notices a "historical transformation" underway in the presiding meanings of love throughout the 19th century (2006, p. 162). The ideal that is in decline, he argues, is the conventional *shringar*ic ideal of Sanskrit aesthetic theory. This ideal, which qualifies as a distinct "aesthetic way of seeing the world" (ibid., p. 166) saw the beauty of the body (usually feminine) as interchangeable with the beauty of the world (ibid.) The *shringar*ic conception of beauty was primarily of *rupa*, that is, beauty of the physical form, something that dazzled the eyes and transformed the physical, emotional state of the onlooker.

"The shringaric aesthetic does not regard looking for physically and materially beautiful things and people as problematic, or even remotely shame-inducing" (ibid., 165). Physical beauty was emphasised as a primal value, a widespread descriptive metaphor and a strong and persuasive force. In Kalidasa's *Meghaduta* (*The Cloud Messenger*) the evening that gradually darkens over a hill resembles a breast: "[The mountain] with its slides covered

with mango trees shining with ripe fruits will certainly attain the state of being looked at by pairs of gods, for it resembles the breast of the Earth, black in the centre and pale white in the surface" (quoted in Kaviraj 2006, p. 166). In pre-modern Sanskrit literature, heroines like Shakuntala and Parvati are often described as having great physical beauty and even male figures like Rama and Krishna, particularly the latter, are described as supremely attractive (ibid., pp. 164–66).

Throughout the 19th century, however, there was a change in the moral ideals and the formal structure of love. The route of this change can be haphazardly traced in the novels of the Bengali author Bankimchandra (1838–94) who "performed a significant re-orientating operation on this traditional aesthetic structure and crucially turned it in a modern direction" (Kaviraj 2006, p. 167). Although exceptional beauty is still paid a literary tribute in his works, he denounces the excessive sexuality of the Sanskrit high texts considering them *ashlila*, obscene (ibid., p. 168). Physical beauty became increasingly obscured by a "heightening of descriptive language, the subtle and complex use of poetic tropes". The Krishna–gopi *vastraharana* (stealing of clothes) episode in the Bhagvata narrative was found to be so offensive by Bankimchandra that he refused to provide a translation of those lines from Sanskrit, considering them incommunicable in the modern Bengali to be "intelligible to women and children" (ibid.). These moral lessons considered the physical beauty of Bankim's heroines to be a tragic curse within the novel's narrative of the social relations of the family. In terms of this narrative, physical beauty became a "prefiguration of emotional disaster" (ibid., p. 169).

Beauty, in Bankim, takes *an emotional turn* and begins to be decoupled from the physical form and riveted instead to "expectations of calm enjoyment, of a general fulfillment and enhancement of life" (ibid.); these are the beginnings of the entrenchment of the concept of *love as prem*. This change

is precisely a problem of form, that is, of approximating the *shringar*ic ideal of love to the new narrative form of the novel that charts individual growth through a causal connection of plot moments. *Shringar*ic love has to be acclimatised to this modern narrative of individuation and self-realisation. Beauty would no longer be of the supreme physical feminine type, as in Sanskrit poetic conventions, but instead interiorised, individualised and emotionalised within modern realism as *prem*.

Kaviraj locates the zenith of this acclimatisation in Rabindranath Tagore's (1861–1941) novels and narrative poems. What is emphasised in his heroines is not their physical beauty but their inner emotional character, traits of which would peg their growth within the novel. "Against this underdetermination of their physical appearance stands the constant emphasis and elaboration of their emotional character: their perceptions, ways of feeling, ways of thinking and their personal development through the staple of the Bildungsroman—misunderstandings, moral examination and eventual resolution" (Kaviraj 2006, p. 172). These are figures of ordinary beauty but of an extraordinary inner character. They make sense not within the frame of high *shringar*ic poetry, or even the Urdu poetic form of the *ghazal*, but instead within the frame of the social novel. It was in the popularity of the novel that this modern concept of *love as projecting individual depth* marked its first decisive moment.

Vijay's demand on dosti.com, an Indian website for 'friendship and dating' for men and women, comes at the end of the almost two century long popularisation of this *prem* ideal. "*Mujhe ak aise sathi ki talash hai*," he says, "*jo bashak jyadan sundar na bhi ho to chalega per ak sunder dil ki malik ho. aur jo apne* nature *se mere sansar main khushiyan bikher de*" [I am in search of such a lover who, although she might not be very beautiful, should be an owner of a beautiful heart. And who, with her nature, will spread happiness in my world] (Vijay, dosti.com, accessed December 2009). This casual use of "nature" to describe the

emotional traits of a lover, her inner universe, fits well within the individuating turn of love.

Like the story of the ascent of the modern romantic ideal told by Giddens, Kaviraj's story tells of the rise of emotional ideals of love as embedded in the newly consolidating genre of the novel, of personal character traits as significant factors for love, and of the thing called the "mutual compatibility" of these traits that was later popularised in the genre of self-help literature on romantic relationships (Giddens 1993, pp. 87–110). This "compatibility" was the new secular equation of love, it was the possibility of it happening, the possibility of that notional *spark*.

"Compatibility matters!" (Mahan27, Uttar Pradesh, PR). On PR, Piyush8 from Bombay rehearses the proverbial spark as a chemical metaphor of chance: "[t]he meeting of two personalities is like the contact of two chemical substances: if there is any reaction, both are transformed." The modern ideals of romance provide a peculiar setting for such experiments between people. They organise the very conditions of possibility and the course of such encounters. PR becomes their heightened testing ground. Self-detailing user profiles are nothing but basic, required scripts of love understood as a compatibility experiment.[8]

[8] In an interview I conducted with Jens, the founder of PlanetRomeo, he told me about the online search of love through the "right criteria", that is, through the frame of compatibility: "Akhil Katyal: The trigger that got PlanetRomeo started was loneliness of a boy in London, an inability to meet the 'right' guy, the perfect Cinderella fit. In some sense PlanetRomeo sells that which is the common dream of our times that in our lives we will find a special person who will salvage us. Has the website made this search easier or messier? Jens: Although internet can never really replace physical contact, it is a great jumping board to make aquaintances. So PR makes it easier to make the first step and put yourself out there. That has definitely been made a lot easier, since its rather anonymous and you can turn it off any time you want. On the other hand, it has made the search perhaps more complicated too. With more than 1 million active users of the website worldwide and around 90,000 guys online simultaneously on our website it is likely that you

In his lecture 'About Love' Michael Hardt made a simple point that love "may be natural but is not at all spontaneous, or rather the forms of love are not spontaneous" (2007). It seemed to him "that love requires organization or training, in other words there are better ways of loving, there are different ways of loving" (ibid.). It is in this sense that love encounters on PR often find themselves happening under the organising sign of compatibility.

Compatibility is one of the major keywords of romantic love, one of its chief ways of occurring. It is an examining mechanism that produces report cards on the possibility of love between any two people. Formally, this ensures that those people that are to meet each other have to be exhaustively profiled, as personalities, prior to and during such a meeting.

This entails that the central text on PR, its basic online unit, the user profile, has to function as a ripe individuated script for the compulsory test of compatibility. It does this by being saturated with individual descriptors like *tastes*, *hobbies*, *interests*, *likings*, *values*, *one's nature*, *shauk* (interests), *pasand* (relish, preferences), *temperaments*, and *types*. jeevan_wlnew from Bangalore writes that his "hobbies are reading, watching movies, some good literature, some politics, a lot of fitness related, sports and the last thing is IT…I am an IT guy" (PR). ajay from Bombay says that he is "an ardent lover of music and an instrumentalist", that he is a "socially inclined guy with an interest in spirituality sans religion n superstitions" (PR). He "believes in intellectual quotient and emotional quotient" and is "searching for a partner with whom… [he] can share everything. Not looking for one night stands but just love, care, respect, fidelity, emotional attachment…physical relation will be a result of these. Consummating a relation has its own importance, never

can't keep track of everyone and *you may miss on the 'love of your life' simply because you haven't put the right criteria in your search*" (personal email, 20 February 2010, emphasis mine).

saying no for it. *but definitely it will start with friendship…dates.. n if we click then further*' (ibid., emphasis mine).

It is only within the scheme of romantic love that the paradox of putting effort and organisation—the routine of dates as the ritualistic quest of compatibility—into something that is after all framed as happening spontaneously and unforeseeably—*if we click*—has the accuracy of experience. Romantic compatibility is always framed both as the object of excessive, banal human labour and also a gift of god.[9]

The individual descriptors listed earlier are the basic criteria for making judgements of compatibility. In talking about compatibility as the guiding principle of modern dating websites, Alia Somani makes a provocative argument about the structural similarity of "astrological prerequisites and caste affiliations" on South Asian matrimonial websites with the strict "psychological profiling" that is staple in websites geared towards "dating" and "romance". She calls each of them "the literal counterparts" of the other (2009). "Among these [dating] websites," she points out,

[9] Jens told me in an email interview that "[t]he 'search for the one' is something that remains important for a lot of us. And as said before, that is not only regarding finding a 'life partner': it can be and also often will be a search for a person for special experiences, for a short or longer period, sex-related or not, or a search for a guide or a club or interest-group which our website provides as well. So, people don't only search for fairy tales. Our users are much more aware of the fact that fairy tales don't really happen…users are much more cautious. When you meet someone outside, you'll know quite instantly if it clicks or not. When you want to meet people online, you need to set some criteria. *Next to your fact-based stats and rigid information about someone's life and physical appearance, our users need to factor in other parameters too, more vague ones. Chemistry is one of them. It's also a good built-in exit strategy, some users look great on paper but when you finally meet them in person, there is no magic. In that case you can simply say, 'Sorry, there is no chemistry'*. Our users are aware of the restraints of internet dating. And, for some people, having a profile on PR takes a lot less effort than going out to bars and clubs every night" (personal email, 20 February 2010, emphasis mine).

"*Eharmony* has perhaps the most extensive psychological testing process. In order to register for the site, users are compelled to take a personality test, which the website claims is based on 'scientific' research concerning heterosexual couples" (Somani 2009). The website "categorizes those who register for the service, and tells them with whom they are compatible" (ibid.). Such rigorous, secular tests of compatibility, Somani hints, might themselves approximate "a singular absence of real choice" (ibid.), an absence that is more visibly obvious in astrological match-making and caste-based marriages.

Michael Hardt can be seen as elaborating on Somani's provocative argument of "compatibility" as covertly limiting the field of choice, on the contrivance of the figure of the 'most compatible' as advertised on dating websites. Hardt talked about five different ways in the modern period in which love has been foiled from attaining its "radical potential", from functioning as a "political concept", as "a field of training for constructing a more democratic society" (Hardt 2007). One of these is the repeated distillation of the concept of love as an "identitarian concept" (ibid.), that is, love as essentially the love of the same. This identitarian concept appeals to the "very limited notions of the love of neighbor but," Hardt thinks "the most common notions of the love of neighbor, as the love of those closest to you" (ibid.) whether socially, geographically, racially or physically. The concept of romantic love, as driven by the wonder-word compatibility, is a form that often lends itself to be framed as the love of the same. A form that broaches only the familiar and is resistant to forms of newness, whether it is newness of behaviour, interests, class, body, caste, language or political stands. "I M LOOKING FOR FRNDS n Person with similar background" (Manifor4, Chandigarh, PR). "Looking for someone with similar interests" (samsonite555, Trivandrum, PR). "Dude My frnd should be very very hygienic just like me" (sanu, Cochin, PR). "...lookin for someone likeminded & who likes to live life to the

fullest…just like me" (mlrguy, Mangalore, PR). "Tiger Looking for another Tiger" (horny_tiger, Bombay, PR).

These are tentative pointers to the search for love as the search of the similar. These, however, are also indicative of a larger trend where websites like PR become private, targeted tools for getting at a more defined version of the desirable. The proxy time/space of the internet allows users to elaborate, even harden, what they desire and what they hate. What is at work here is the current major role of the internet—as an extension of the service sector market, a way of providing individualised services to customers, meeting specific demands of each user (Sassen 2000). User profiles are after all *custom-made* texts. They are driven by the key word of *choice*. This trend manages to skirt "uncomfortable" differences, which are more frequent and unavoidable in unorganised, physical cruising sites like parks and public loos (Seabrook 1999).

These differences might be of language; "If there is one thing i can't tolerate, it's WRONG ENGLISH!…I can be rude, insensitive, sarcastic depending upon the level to which you irritate me… check your grammar before you message me" (spicy_twink0, Chennai, PR). They might be of body type; "I am too cute too fair sexy gym toned body. I want some one hunky Masculine Guy only…I just cant go with Feminine/Chubby/Shapeless guys. Pls dont messege me if you are like that" (Sexysammy4u, Hyderabad, PR). The differences could also be effected through the favourite word-concept of the Indian newspaper matrimonials, 'decent'. It involves a battery of social criteria like class, educational background and lucrativeness of career; "hi I am decent smart well educated guy i love to have very decent cool guys to keep in touch" (rai, Bangalore, PR). Individualised thus as user profiles, the tendency can be to encounter only the familiar, aspects one has already encountered in oneself. This makes sense in the more recent services-oriented form of the internet (Sassen 2000). It is, in a larger sense, the rejection of the figure of the dissimilar, the strange and the distant.

A SMALL NOTE ON THE JOSTLING REPERTOIRES OF LOVE: THE CASE OF THE *GHAZAL*

I too could recall moonlit roofs, those nights of wine
But Time has shelved them now in Memory's dimmed places…
World, should Ghalib keep weeping you will see a flood
drown your terraced cities, your marble palaces
(Agha Shahid Ali, 'Not All, Only a Few Return', 2009)

If romantic love is framed as a narrative of first discovering mutual compatibility and then praying that it lasts, even as one *works* on the relationship, then surely expressions of love that do not adhere to this narrative impulse or those which interrupt its flow must have an ambiguous relationship with it. Like the secular and the sacred aspects of love that constantly intrude upon each other, the modern narrative of romance always has to jostle with the non-narrative expressions of love, such as the *ghazal*.

The form of the *ghazal* from the Urdu poetic repertoire lends itself to situational quotations within PR user profiles. Samar (name changed) from Bombay who is 45 years old enjoys "reading widely, travel, long solitary walks, good friends who are gregarious," and "classical and old Hindi film music" (PR). He believes he is "sincere and honest" in his "relations with friends" and enjoys "healthy and safe sex with men willing to explore desire and passion…I hope to find some decent men willing to shed their inhibitions as much as their pants" (ibid.). In his bid to find men willing to share such moments of "desire and passion" he quotes extensively from Ghalib (1797–1869), 19th century Delhi's Urdu poet whose *ghazal*s have been widely diffused in forms of Indian popular culture such as the "classical and old Hindi film music" that Samar likes:

Koi mere dil se pooche tere teere neemkash ko
Yeh khalish kahaan se hoti, jo jigar ke paar hota

[Ask my heart about thy half drawn arrow,
Where would the pain come from, had it seared my heart]
(quoted in Samar, PR).

I want to suggest that there might be a crucial relation between Samar's desires and the forms that he employs to fulfil them. His craving is to enjoy men, desirous and passionate, willing to shed their forms of embeddedness, whether social ("inhibitions") or literal ("pants"). His is a desire for a series of high moments of pleasure with different men, not a singular romantic plot of love for one. I want to ask whether it is purely coincidental that he quotes the form of the *ghazal* or does the *ghazal* lend itself peculiarly to the expression of his desires?

Different repertoires of love invoke different expectations, situations and characters. They facilitate different circumstances of affection. In writing about the "range of idioms and images of love" in the English and Hindi/Urdu manuals of love letters for men and women that she found on the footpaths in north India, Francesca Orsini sees a recognisable difference in the spheres and ways of loving invoked by the use of different languages. "English," she says, arguing tentatively for those love letter manuals, "indicates one's willingness to participate in the game of romantic love and/or of individual advancement, independence and career orientation" (Orsini 2006b, p. 241). "Urdu," however, "indicates either a highly romantic nature or seduction and is delinked from marriage and family" (ibid.).

The English booklet *Love Letters*, compiled by "Rajesh" (Delhi, 1995) is one of a 'Do's and Dont's General Books of Everyday Use' which includes those on babycare, pregnancy, yoga, guests and parties, honeymoon, diseases, neighbours, money, examination and interview, servants and relatives. Love is thus recognized as one of life's areas of experience about which one needs to have *practical* knowledge' (ibid., p. 242; emphasis in original).

It is, here, deeply embedded in the everydayness of experiencing marriage and family—the romantic relationship never simply lasts by itself, you always have to work with it. "Literariness," staple of Urdu letters, "by comparison, plays a less important role" (ibid., p. 244). "Earnestness means earnestness of *feeling* ('true love') and earnestness of *intentions* (love leading to marriage)" (ibid., emphasis mine).

Samar is looking for playful men outside the set-up of marriage or, at any rate, he seeks to temporarily draw them out. He seeks to seduce men "willing to explore" and uses an idiom that is distinctly *unpractical* as advice on long-term romance or familial matters, but eminently serviceable as a device of immediate, teasing seduction. The form of the *ghazal* has the wholeness of mood or feeling—a *ghazal* can variously rest on jealousy, hope, desire, despair, pain, seduction—but it never has a narrative of individual growth and achievement through causal linkages. A bildungsromanic conceit would never be possible within the "two-line universe" of the *ghazal* that is composed of autonomous couplets that, except the first and last, can be quoted in whichever order (Pritchett quoted in Orsini 2006a, p. 18).

Defying narrative, the *ghazal* in a sense is the moment of desire itself. The beloved becomes an object of endless play rather than a staged quest. The conventional *ghazal* is suspended in a timeless universe of dazzlement on the verge of the appearance of the beloved. It stages a continual delight and suffering at the beloved's hand. It loops an incessant game of seduction, of arrows half-drawn to pierce hearts, hunters preying on innocents, suicides being contemplated and the lover's enthrallment and wounds perpetually deepening. Kashmiri-American poet Agha Shahid Ali understood this formal element of timelessness in the *ghazal* well enough to describe Ghalib's tears as perpetual: "World, should Ghalib keep weeping you will see a flood."

This timelessness is crucial, it skirts narrative. The sight of the beloved, common in the *ghazal*, is an experience of being utterly

mesmerised, but crucially enough this experience never projects on to a distinct possibility of the beloved's attainment, or a shared future with him. In other words, it is not the instrumental love at first sight of romance. Not a grasping of interior qualities, but instead a more frontal enthrallment by sheer sight; "*unkey dekhey sey jo aajaatee hai munh par raunak / voh samajhtey hain ki beemaar ka haal achchhaa hai*" [As my face lights up when I set eyes upon him / He thinks my illness has passed, I must be better] (Ghalib, translated by Singh 2007, pp. 60–61).

Samar is, in his own words, looking for "men willing to explore desire and passion", not for one to set up house with. The *ghazal* for him works as a bit of an inveiglement. It lures the other but not into an everlasting union. It scripts episodes with others but not a shared story. This resonates with the form of the *ghazal* where separation does not simply lead to union but, instead, these two states of being are relentlessly exchanged with each other. This repeated exchange foregrounds the provisional 'I' of the Urdu *ghazal*, as an active placeholder of these elaborate states of feeling, not as a novel character developing with the passage of connected situations (Mufti 2004, p. 247). This provisional 'I' of the *ghazal*—seductive, desirous, fleeting— is more lucrative for Samar's aims than the developmental 'I' of romantic love.

Modern narratives of romantic love, however, are insistent. They try to incorporate the *ghazal* in at least three distinct ways: as evocative quotations that interpret romance; as ironic or unpractical, campy intrusions; and as museumised Urdu remnants within an aspirationally English language universe. This incorporation is never full and the *ghazal* continues to place the romantic strain in relief by underlining its necessary contradictions.

tanhayi, a 22-year-old from Jaipur, Rajasthan, is "looking for someone special someone that could recolor" his "life from Blue to rainbows"; it's "not easy," he says, "being single since birth… you can't hide the fact that your insecure to anyone who has been

in a romantic relationship…ehehehe.." (PR). This insecurity is elaborated in two poetic gestures that form the rest of his profile. It is uncertain whether he quotes or authors it, but the *ghazal* here becomes useful as a device of consolation in the face of the high romantic dream, and as a key to the necessary uncertainty that is at the heart of the search and sustenance of the romance narrative. In other words, the *ghazal* reads between the lines of romantic love:

> *chup rehtein hai koi khafa na ho jaye, / hamari wajah se koi rusva na ho jaye, / saanse chalti hain jis ummid ka daman thaam ke, / kahin woh daaman bhi hum se juda na ho jaye… / Likhi hai yeh ghazal sirf tere liye / Dewane bane bhi to sirf tere liye* [I stay silent for he might get angry if I speak, / because of me, he might be pained, / He, on whose trust and hope, I breathe / What if he parts from me… / I write this ghazal only for you / I am enthralled only by you] (PR).

The *ghazal* becomes an utterance that at once soothes the subject of romance and educates him in the inconsistencies implicit in this narrative. As a form it becomes useful to romance by simultaneously making sense of the deep captivation at the hands of the beloved—"*Har pyar se pyare lagte ho tum mujhe*" [You are more lovable than every other love] (tanhayi, PR)—and also understanding the necessary fear of loss that this captivation entails once it is enclosed in a prolonged narrative—"*kisi ko itna apna na bana / ki use khone ka dar laga rahe*" [don't make someone so much your own / that you might forever fear his parting] (tanhayi, PR).

The *ghazal* is also often censured on PR as things that are too poetic, poetic here understood as hyperbolic, unpractical and outside the alleged realism of self-help or newspaper advice columns on romance and sex with one's partner. "I used to be a poet. I've learnt to be more intelligent and practical now," raremoments from Kolkata writes, and continues on his romantic search for "intelligent, smart, goodlooking, educated, communicative, conversant…preferably slim and sexy" men. For dontbugmee from Delhi, who is 34 and a "die hard romantic…deep-down

inside" and "yearn[s] for permanency...someone to wake up with every morning and do a little nok-jhonk [bickering] about the breakfast/dinner menu, about who messed up the room etc.," the *ghazal* becomes an altogether obsolete form, unsuitable to the "business" of romantic love. He frames other people's usage of the form as interruptive and campy, as a bit of a hopeless joke: "Sorry, no enticing poetry, sher-o-shayree [couplets] or boring blogs for introductions! Let me get right to business!" (PR) The *ghazal*, as evidenced on PR, is at once a strong cultural citation and a pushy remainder that meddles with other languages of love. It is at once a campy efflux and a long-standing non-narrative device plotted oddly with romantic love to make sense of its contradictions. As a form, it is both futile and key to this matter of love.

IDIOMS ON PR: FRIEND[10]

> Friendship is not about "I m sorry" its about "abbe teri galti hai" [Damn, it's all your fault] / Friendship is not about "I m there for u" or "I missed u" it's about "kahan marr gaya saale" [Where the hell have you been, dog?] / Friendship is not about "I understand" its about "sab teri wajah se hua manhus" [This is all because of you, fucker] / Friendship is not about "I care for u" its about "kamino tumhe chhod ke kahan jaunga" [Where else will I go if I leave you buggers] / Friendship is not about "I love that girl" its about "saalo izzat se dekho tumhari bhabhi hain" [Look at her with respect, she's your sister-in-law]
>
> (Mystic_Aswad, Bangalore, PR)

> I am bisexual and not looking for relations or gay life partner neither interested in gay marriage don't want to spend life with male. So guys if you are looking for same then I am sorry I am not for you... Guys who are open minded, frank and modern, like good friendship and interested in man to man sex are most welcome...Place for sex: No (Living with family, even can't arrange)
>
> (mittrr, Faridabad, PR)

[10] Related idioms are the lover, the *yaar* (buddy), the *dost*, the *mitr*, the *mast* (playful), the sentimental, the companion, the gay.

hi...dear i am...from raipur 23y,fair,hot and sexy, i am bisexual, live in sunder nagar, i want some good soul boys for true and long friend ship. i come hear not for only sex but emotional touch is much important for me. i have deep faith on my god. i am an enginer...if you intrested with me pls contact with me...i am waiting for you...m here for friendship & relationship...m searching here trusted & honest guy...m here also for fun & masti [play]

(Arora, Raipur, Chattissgarh, PR)

[I]f you also thought u wana be my friend then u always welcome. / i wanna only good human being as my friend later see where we stand. and yes u can trust me i can prove myself ur best friend . / THIS SONG IS / FOR MY LOVE / chaha hai tujko chahegaye hardum mar k bhi tujhse yeh pyar na hoga kam :) [I have always loved you, I will always love you, even if I die, my love for you would not lessen] / FOR MY FRIENDSHIP / As i don't leave u alone in middle of life when u need good friend or when u need sme with u i am always with u / yaar mangyasi rabhaa teko roke, kyari mey khudaayi mang lai. pyar mera kar rabha mere hawale, yaar bina dil mera konn sambhaley [I cried and asked for my sweetheart, God, did I ask for the entire universe? / give my love to me, God, without that sweetest friend, who else would shelter my heart]

(sweets4u, Delhi, PR)

In the last decade, male friendship in Bombay cinema has been grist to the mill of new queer scholarship on film. The "continuous tradition" in Bombay cinema of "framing narratives with the love of two friends" has newly shifted under the academic lens to be mined for innovative interpretations of relations between men on screen (Shohini Ghosh 2002, p. 208). One of the commonplaces of this scholarship is that "buddy films can be read as evocative of homoerotic love, suggested through overlapping boundaries between love and friendship" (ibid.).

Ruth Vanita, in writing about *Dosti* (Friendship, 1964, directed by Satyen Bose) and *Tamanna* (1998, directed by Mahesh Bhatt) reads their film scripts for five pointers concerning male–male relationships. These are "primacy, exclusivity, duration (these operate on the narrative level [how much of the relationship is

seen on screen and for how long]), intensity (this operates on the lyric level [how evocatively it is shown]), and the demonstration of moral worth (this operates on the socioethical level [is it offered as an ideal])" (Vanita 2002, p. 149). Judged with these five criteria, both films are read by her as "legitimiz[ing], even celebrat[ing], same-sex love" among men (ibid., p. 157). Ghosh calls *Dosti* a "buddy melodrama" (Shohini Ghosh 2002, p. 208).

In *Dosti*, young male actors Sudhir Kumar (Mohan) and Sushil Kumar (Ramu) come to occupy the same "diegetic space conventionally occupied by heterosexual couples" (ibid.), the "story of passionate friendship is narrated through established tropes of romance, separation, and eventual reconciliation" (ibid.). In the formal absence of overt sexual depiction on the 1960s Bombay screen, both cross-sex love and same-sex friendship are represented through the formulaic singing of songs of happiness or separation, the repeated scenes of caresses and embraces, the melodramatic appeal to sentimentality in screen dialogue and relations, and a script stretched between enthrallment, severance and reunion (Shohini Ghosh, 2002, p. 208; Vanita 2002, p. 147). For the climax of *Dosti*, the elder female figure in the film script, Mausi, blesses Ramu and Mohan. The blessing of the elderly is a diegetic placeholder for the man–woman romantic pair, its moral pivot, and makes for a good climactic moment on screen. Here it is seen as already *unselfconsciously* extended to the male friends: "*Bhagwan kare tumhari jodi isi tarah bani rahe*" [May God always protect your pair] (quoted in Vanita 2002, p. 154).

In the film songs for *Dosti* written by Urdu poet Majrooh Sultanpuri (1922–2000)—who was a disciple of North Indian poet Jigar Moradabadi (1890–1960) and was steeped in the traditions of the Urdu *ghazal* and the gender vagueness of the figure of the lyrical beloved—love and friendship figure as inseparable: "*dosti hai bhai, to behna hai pyar*" [if friendship is the brother, the sister is love] (ibid.). Framed within the cinematic genre that foregrounded sentiment over sex, the content of

friendship is seen *as* the content of love: "*Koyi jub rah na paaye / Mere sang aaye / Ke pag pag deep jalaaye / Meri dosti mera pyar*" [When you find no way / come with me / with every step we shall light a lamp / My friendship, my love] (Sultanpuri, 1964).

Readings of male friendship in Bombay cinema, such as Vanita's and Ghosh's, are often explicitly organised by the frame metaphors of the continuum or of overlap. Vanita says that she is interested in "the continuum between romantic friendship and love, the slippery space where affection [between men] slides into or is coded as the erotic without being overtly depicted as sexual" (2002, p. 146). Such a "continuum," she argues, "is evident in the name of India's longest running gay magazine *Bombay Dost* (*Bombay Friend*), founded in 1990" (ibid.). One of the main sub-sections in her essay is titled: 'Love, Sex, Marriage and Friendship: The Slippery Continuum' (ibid.). What in Ghosh's words were the "overlapping boundaries between [male] love and friendship" could be easily subsumed by interpretive metaphors like Vanita's continuum.

I would argue—using the contents and the conceits of PR user profiles—that the continuum is too easy an analytic. It is provocative but rarely productive. It is too smooth a metaphor to be able to understand those discrepancies between specific situations of male 'love, sex, marriage and friendship' that never simply slip or slide into each other. It is too glib a frame for a far more complex and exciting study that Ghosh and Vanita actually do—looking at narrative strategies, screen-time allocation, song conventions, cinematic traditions of sentimentality, on-screen absence of sexual explicitness, each of which are not adequately explained by this metaphor of the continuum. The metaphor is very useful insofar as it claims the radical proximity—a proximity that is both ethnographic (on ground) and emblematic (on cinema)—of the different situations of intimacy between men, whether it is friendship, love or sex. However, it is too slick to point out the leaps, the interruptions, the symbolic breakages

that happen between these different situations. The problem with the frame of the continuum, as used by Vanita, is that it is too continuous.

The idea of the continuum between same-sex love and friendship has had a contested history from its first major articulation within the fold of gay and lesbian studies. The history of this academic discipline through the 1990s and till today in Europe and America has been dotted with references to Adrienne Rich's 'Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence' (1980), the essay in which she introduced this use of the metaphor of the continuum. Vanita, who teaches at the University of Montana, and Ghosh who studied at Cornell and often tours Euro-American universities, are both active participants in the debates within transnational gay and lesbian studies, part of the traffic of its concepts, and work through the creativity and the confusions of concepts such as continuum, slippage or overlap.

Writing a letter to Adrienne Rich from New York City in April 1981, the editors of the book that published Rich's essay that had already appeared in the journal *Signs* a year earlier, Ann Snitow, Christine Stansell and Sharon Thompson, all Marxist-feminist scholars, told Rich: "[w]e know you are a poet, not an historian, and we look forward to reading your metaphors all our lives—and standing straighter as feminists, as women, for having read them. But the metaphor of the lesbian continuum is open to all kinds of misunderstandings, and these sometimes have odd political effects" (quoted in Rich, 2003, p.229). They reported that "at a recent meeting around the abortion-rights struggle, the notion of continuum arose in the discussion several times and underwent divisive transformation" and "[o]verall, the notion that two ways of being existed on the same continuum was interpreted to mean that those two ways were the same. The sense of range and gradation that your description evokes disappeared. Lesbianism and female friendship became exactly the same thing. Similarly, heterosexuality and rape became the

same" (quoted in Rich 2003, p.229).

In her reply from Massachusetts in November that same year, Rich agreed that her concept "can be misused" and that what she "had thought to delineate rather complexly as a continuum has begun to sound more like *life-style shopping*" (ibid., p. 231, emphasis added). Her very phrase "lesbian continuum" had come "from a desire to allow for the greatest possible variation of female-identified experience, while paying a different kind of respect to lesbian existence—the traces and knowledge of women who have made their primary erotic and emotional choices for women" (ibid.)

For Rich, the role of the lesbian continuum was two-fold. First, it ably skirted the problem word which was lesbian itself. Rich said it "has a clinical and limiting ring" and is often tamed as just another 'life-style'. Second, it established a broader platform for feminist politics. It expanded the bases of support—emotional, practical, political, erotic—between and among women. Rich revised the terms of the "erotic" in order to gear it towards feminist political ends, understanding it as

> that which is unconfined to any single part of the body or solely to the body itself; as an energy not only diffuse but, as Audre Lorde has described it, omnipresent in "the sharing of joy, whether physical, emotional, psychic," and in the sharing of work; as the empowering joy which "makes us less willing to accept powerlessness" (ibid., p. 222).

The diffusion of the terms of the erotic, now newly understood "in female terms", and reading it as implicit in all "female friendship and comradeship" was Rich's keen political strategy and her vision of a more inclusive feminist practice. It was "a conscious restructuring of feminist analysis and criticism, not just a token reference or two" to the lesbian (quoted in Rich 2003, p. 231). The idea of the continuum was about political vision before it was about sociological precision.

Nor was Rich's continuum ever conceptualised as a stretched

spectrum between two standalone points of lesbianism and female heterosexuality. In fact much of what expressed itself as unequivocally *lesbian*—lesbian separatist politics, Colette's erotic writings, and lesbianism as an optional lifestyle—jarred with Rich's continuum and seemed to overflow its otherwise inclusive frame. They interrupted the continuity of Rich's metaphor.

The French novelist Colette (1873–1954), Rich thought, despite her reputation as a "lesbian writer" and precisely because of this reputation, is "a less reliable source on the lesbian continuum than," she thinks, the English novelist Charlotte Brontë (1816–55). Rich argued that Bronte "understood that while women may, indeed must, be one another's allies, mentors, and comforters in the female struggle for survival," they always find a "quite extraneous delight in each other's company and attraction" unlike Colette who just "writes about lesbian existence as if for a male audience" (ibid.). Colette's earliest "lesbian" novels, the Claudine series, Rich reports, "were written under compulsion for her husband and published under both their names" (ibid.). Colette's texts do not abide by the political vision of Rich's lesbian continuum.

Judged on the same basis, Toni Morrison's novel *Sula* (1973) and Meridel LeSueur's *The Girl* (1978), with their depiction of the "diffusion and frustration of female bonding" and the "competition of heterosexual compulsion for women's attention" come to better examine and embody this continuum than do, Rich claims, in sheer contrast, those "shallow or sensational 'lesbian scenes' in recent commercial fiction" (ibid.).

The commercial, the bluntly erotic (or in Rich's terms, the "pornographic") and the lifestyle lesbian are not valid enough as political feminist subjects to be plotted on to her continuum. They exceed it and, even more, they spoil it. This latter kind of lesbian, then, is differentiated from Rich's continuum and, more crucially, always remains differentiable from it. This lesbian symbolically breaks the continuum and is the undissolved precipitate at the end of Rich's political experiment. "[F]or lesbian existence to

realize this political content in an ultimately liberating form," Rich writes, "the erotic choice *must* deepen and expand into conscious woman identification—into lesbian feminism" (ibid., emphasis mine). All that cannot 'deepen and expand', that is, cannot become politically useful, is the remainder to the continuum, something indivisible, something it does not include or explain. *The effect of continuity in the metaphor is sustained precisely by having remainders.*

My first premise is that Rich's *continuum as feminist political strategy* cannot be simply imported as Vanita's *continuum as analytic frame for male friendships on screen* or on ground. The former—being a political vision—was never equipped to deal with and produce exhaustive accounts of the specific contexts of male or female friendship and love—Euro-American or South Asian, in film or in day-to-day life. It was after all, as visionary politics is usually articulated, hopelessly universal; Rich's continuum itself extended "through each woman's life and throughout history" (ibid.).

My second premise is that any use of this frame of the continuum should brace itself for the remainders that it will not explain. We should not use the idea only for the predictable and the politically cheerful prospect of *proving* that same-sex relations have always been present and represented in 'traditionally homosocial' worlds, such as South Asia, thus triggering queer revisionary readings of practically every text of the distant or recent past. Beyond this, when we use the 'continuum' we should be ready for the volume of undissolved precipitates in the regions and the texts that we study, of ways of relating that just do not *slide* into each other, that resist the flow. Of intimacies that become differentiable, that cannot be housed in our metaphor. This will prepare us to understand the contradictions between the many concepts of same-sex love and friendship that are not entirely soluble in each other, of intimacies that frequently *do* reach crisis points in their definition, and of popular practices of male fucking and fun that

do not coherently continue into male emotion or togetherness, or for that matter, into gay lives. The idiom of friendship will make sense only on such a disjointed continuum.

For mittrr (*mitr* is Hindi for friend), quoted in the section epigraph, 35-years-old, "bisexual", married to a woman and in Faridabad, the search is for "[g]uys who are open-minded, frank and modern," who "like good friendship" and are "interested in man to man sex" (PR). mittrr's wishes could easily be framed within a continuum where "friendship" and "man to man sex" pose no contradictions for each other, are said in the same breath, look like they slip into each other. However, mittrr's wishes are full of distinctions, of breakage points, of specific associations of sex and not others. He explicitly distinguishes his search. He avoids it from being mistaken for a search for "relations or gay life partner", he is "neither interested in gay marriage", nor does he "want to spend life with male" (PR). *He brackets out from friendship the time that is implicit in the modern concept of romance.* This gesture is crucial to his "frank" and "modern" scheme.

For mittrr in Faridabad, "modern" friendship works as a mode of spending time with another man, a time which involves sex, but one which does not stretch out these moments of sex into living together. Friendship understood as being in excess of the duty of marriage, as something which is outside the main romantic relationship with a "life partner". Friendship does not comprise the time that is to be shared for life, not the time that visibly constitutes a romantic relationship. Friendship is understood as a different temporal equation. One that would never treat time spent with a friend as the primary expenditure of one's time or social duties. sweethart4u from Bombay works with this modern idea of the secondariness of friendship when he goes about "looking for friendship first and if things work out we can take it to *next step*" (PR, emphasis mine).[11] Friendship

[11] This modern idea of the secondariness of friendship is also precisely

as something *prior* to romance, something differentiable from it

the notional secondariness that is accorded to male friendship in comparison to the idea of male–female romantic marriage. In her remarkable work *Women with Mustaches and Men without Beards: Gender and Sexual Anxieties of Iranian Modernity*, Afsaneh Najmabadi found that in "the nineteenth century, homoeroticism and same-sex practices came to mark Iran [in the eyes of Europe and of much of its own educated elite] as backward; heteronormalization of eros and sex became a condition of 'achieving modernity', a project that called for heterosocialization of public space…a reconfiguration of family life…[and a] feminization of the category 'beloved'" (2005, pp. 3–7). Significantly, the early Iranian feminist "marriage bargain" was complicit in this; this heterosocialisation was its "burden of birth" (ibid., p. 174, p. 232). "Once marriage…[came to be seen as] a romantic contract, the exchange was presumably mutually even [between women and men]…[t]he 'object of exchange' was now love, companionship, and mutual attendance to each other's desires and needs," in other words, the primary expenditure of one's time and affects (ibid.). This romantic plot, which is evident in India as well (after Bankim, Tagore et al.) and its corollary of heterosocialisation (after Hali, Syed Ahmed Khan et al.) made a demand, in Najmabadi's words, of modern men to make a "heterosocial promise" (ibid., p. 175). This was seen to be crucial within the "project of women's emancipation", "[w]omen haggled over the terms of [this] promise, demanding that men desexualize *their* homosociality: if you want a loving companionate wife, stop fooling around with young men and boys. Bibi Khanum Astarabadi's *Vices of Men* (1894) considered older man–younger man sexual liaisons (*amradbazi*) both a major male vice and more significantly, a vice that disrupted the companionate marital relationship" (ibid., p. 176). Whereas Najmabadi uses the histories of male homoeroticism in Iran to alert "feminist historiography" to the "important task" of remembering, of bringing "back into national belonging" figures of male (and female) homoeroticism and figures of gender playfulness, to be avowed within the "modern national" (ibid., p. 243), for our immediate argument about the idiom of friendship, her history recounts an iconic moment of deprioritisation of the (male) 'friend', hesitantly in practice but more in modern symbolisation, in comparison to the female 'lover'. This deprioritisation, however, was not complete. Even early Iranian feminists realised this. "[T]ransferring one's affective bonds from the world of mother to the beloved husband…[was not without risks]…To put all one's affective eggs," Najmabadi writes, "in one man's basket was extremely risky, for men advocated the romanticization of marriage without relinquishing the prerogatives of a procreative sexual contract. They wished to keep (and in most Islamic countries

by being understood as its doorway, one that is transformed into romantic love by a symbolic *step*.

The Lebanese-American writer Kahlil Gibran (d. 1931) countered this mode of spending time that was implicit in the modern idea of friendship: "And let your best be for your friend… For what is your friend that you should seek him with hours to kill? / Seek him always with hours to live" (2006, p. 26). In mittrr's case, male friendship breaks the symbolic continuum by this notional secondariness to the romantic relationship with a girl. He makes the secondariness in the idea of friendship do a specific work for him. Notionally remaining a satellite to the *chief* social bond of the romantic relationship, for which he has a *place*, a home, a marriage, it gets him the fun of sex with men. Friendship as discontinuous with romantic fidelity, as plotted on a different timeline of fun, as premised on a greater social mobility of men outside marriage.

I could also read the general search for friendship or *dosti* as laced with a covert intention, with irony. As a strategic cover or a euphemism for the search of romantic love in another man outside his marriage—friendship of men with men as a convenient social lie for love between them. There are reasons to do this. After all, even mittrr's profile goes on to define him as "fun loving, down to earth, decent, well educated guy" and as looking for "decent and good-looking guys for friendship" (PR). Later he elaborates on his height, interests, favourite movies, dislikes, allergies, sex positions, etc., implying that his brand of "friendship" is made up of the same building blocks of compatibility that also prop up

continue to do so) their prerogatives to be polygynous and to divorce at will. They would continue to prioritize their male–male friendships, which now found an additional layer of affective meanings through the reinscription of homoerotic love as patriotic love. Sons of homeland could now claim new affective bonds as patriotic brother-citizens" (ibid., p. 175). The idiom of friendship, thus, as can be seen in Najmabadi and in my own study, has a long and haphazard history of contestation with the connected idiom of romantic love.

romantic love. However, this lie works in interesting ways. The lie itself is a proof of the fact that the social continuum between friendship and love is a bit of a myth. That male friendship can be used as a cover means its general social meanings must already be discontinuous with that of romance or marriage with the opposite sex. This discontinuity is the basis of the lie. The lie is the disjoint in the continuum, its tear and stress.

Arora (name changed), 24 years old and from Raipur, is looking for "friendship & relationship" (PR). The ampersand, the crucial conjunction brings "friendship" and "relationship" very near and yet accords difference. It is precisely due to this two-fold search that he can more easily infuse the concept of male friendship with narrative length, emotional content and the deeper characterisation peculiar to the loved one in modern romance. He wants "good soul boys for true and long friendship... not only for sex but emotional touch". He brings together the criteria regular in romantic love and in friendship by searching for a "trusted & honest guy" and also "for fun & masti [play]" respectively (PR). sweets4u, 23 years old and from Delhi, who has separate songs dedicated to his potential lover and to his potential friends, rests on the different temporalities implicit in friendship and in love, saying "if you also thought u wana be my friend then u always welcome, but / yes if i make relationship i be only for my lover till my life" (PR). Although the Punjabi film song he pledges for his future friends uses the words "*pyar*" (love, lover) and "*yaar*" (friend, lover) almost interchangeably ('*Yaar mangiyasi*', Anand Raj Anand in film *Kaante*; 2002), sweets4u has different working meanings of the terms on ground.

The friend, in the modern idea of the romantic relationship, is always a satellite to the primary loved companion. He inhabits the interstices of the time spent with the lover. Several men who are looking for men on PR are participants in this schema. Some PR users distinguish between their female partners and male friends (the premise of the lie to the wife for male sex and

intimacy outside marriage). More interestingly, others explicitly distinguish between their male partners and male friends. This distinction is implied within romantic love. It resists the range of the idiom of friendship, tries to cast the figure of the friend in narrower, asexual terms. On PR, there is no concept of the friend, of *dosti* that is not already tied up in different ways with the concept of romance. These concepts already engage and affect each other. The *lover* already has some bearing on the *friend*.

The accommodating bandwidth of male homosocial friendship—usually studied in South Asian queer scholarship, one that allows love within the guise of buddy camaraderie, allows male friendship as *dosti* or *yaari* to be experienced as a series of intimacies considered given within man–woman love or marriage, as almost continuous with it—both asserts itself on PR but is also foiled within it. It is foiled as men themselves tentatively distinguish between their lovers and friends, between a generic *lover* and *friend*. This distinction is the cornerstone of the modern model of romance, its primary way of arranging relationships between people. The popularity of the model of romance hampers the bandwidth—already discontinuous—of experiences capable within male friendships. The modern continuum between male friendship and male love then is experienced only as a series of crisis points—whether as lies, as next steps or as shifting boundaries of what is done among friends. We now look at *masti* as one of these crisis points.

A SMALL NOTE ON THE JOSTLING REPERTOIRES OF FRIENDSHIP: THE CASE OF *MASTI*

> In February of 1999…a "conference of gays in the country," entitled Yaarian 1999 ['*Yaar*' crudely translates as 'male friend'], was held in Hyderabad. One of the self-conscious aims of this conference was to "try and identify an indigenous, or desi, terminology for the concept of gay" (Reddy 2006, p. 218).

> सुबह शिवराज कि आँखें खुलीं तो देखा सरनाम सिंह उसीकी चारपाई पर पड़ा है और उसका एक हाथ उसके सीने पर है। यह कोई नयी बात नहीं थी...कभी सरनाम उसे बदहवास कि तरह बाहों में दबोच लेता। उसके बालों में अपना मूंह गड़ाकर लम्बी सांसें खींचता। ठोड़ी उठाकर कहता – "मेरी तरफ देखो।"...और शिवराज इसी सोच में पड़ा रह जाता कि आखिर यह स्नेह यह प्यार कैसा होता है, इसमें दुर्गन्ध क्यूं आती है? इसकी सीमा कहाँ तक है। किस बिंदु के बाद यह सड़ने लगता है। वह कहाँ तक इसे स्वीकार करे, कौन-सी सीमा बना ले। यह सब रोज बनकर टूट-फूट जाता है [When Shivraj woke up he found out that Sarnaam Singh was lying with him on his charpoy and his hand was on his chest. This was no new thing...Sometimes Sarnaam Singh used to crazedly hold him tight in his arms. He used to bury his face in his hair and take long and deep breaths. Used to lift his chin and say – "Look at me."...And Shivraj was just left thinking about what sort of love this is, why does it give off a stench? Where is its boundary? *After what precise point does it start to rot?* How much of it should he accept, where should he draw a line? Each day these thoughts arise and disperse] (Kamleshwar 1979, pp. 30–31, emphasis mine)

"hello friends how are u guys m here for masti n fun with nice happening guys m put up in west delhi without place" (saurabh, Delhi, PR). "i am fun loving guy down to earth want to spend good times with friends and share feelings not too much hanky panky and lots of fun outing movies and masti long ride holding each other" (arzoo, Bhubhaneswar, Orissa, PR). "Hi Its Arun... welcome to my World...its full of fun n masti" (Arun, Jorhat, Assam, PR). "all m2m/gay sex liking r welcome 4 fun n masti. hav gay life sex with ur boy friend. enjoy day n night whole life. its so gud n sexy" (raja, Brahmapur, Orissa, PR).

In the vocabulary of Urdu–Sufi poetry, *mast* was the state of the poet in deep enthrallment or devotion. *Mast* implied at once an experience of ecstasy, a figure of intoxication and the pinnacle of pleasure. To be *mast* was to step out of the ordinary equilibrium of day-to-day life, to lose all control and surrender oneself to the composite figure of the divine and the beloved. North Indian Urdu poet Jigar Moradabadi (1890–1960), along with two other poets Abdul Hameed Adam and Anwar Jogi, elaborate this meaning of *masti* in the song made famous by the

voice of Pakistani Sufi singer Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan (1948–97): "*Saaraa jahaan mast, jahaan kaa nizaam mast / Din mast, raat mast, saher mast, shaam mast / Mast shiisha, mast subuu, mast jaam mast / Hai terii chashm-e-mast se har Khaas-o-aam mast*" [The whole world is ecstatic, the order of the world is ecstatic / The day is ecstatic, so is the dawn and so is evening. / The glass, cup and wine are all ecstatic / Because of your intoxicating eyes, everyone and everything is ecstatic] (Midas Musics, 2007).

Outside poetic conventions, *mast* was understood to be anything that was enjoyable, recreational and broke the routine patterns of familial obligations or official duty. In most PR profiles where *masti* appears, it is almost always coupled with the English word 'fun', suggesting a convergence of their meanings. Festivals and holidays are occasions par excellence for *masti*. Repeatedly visiting the North Indian city of Benares in the 1990s, the American cultural anthropologist Lawrence Cohen reported that the city had "a reputation for having a particularly *mast* (pleasurable) Holi, or a particularly nasty one, depending on whom you ask" (1995). *Masti* is also a common umbrella term in the Hindi/Urdu belt in India for the rituals of enjoyment and play between young and male (and to a lesser extent older and female) friends. The frame of *masti* could include leisure activities—for arzoo *masti* means "outings", "movies" and "long rides". It could also include handjobs, blowjobs or fucking, like for several men interviewed by Seabrook (1999) on the cruising grounds of Delhi in the late 1990s who used words like "*maza*" (enjoyment), "*masti*" (fun, play) and "*khel*" (game, play) to describe what they were up to in the cruising parks.

Masti is the realm of play and enjoyment. It is always located in an *elsewhere* in relation to the quotidian and the obligatory. Male–male sex figures in this *elsewhere* of the space of man–woman family and marriage. It is commonplace within the cultural ethnographies done in India in the wake of HIV-AIDS health interventions throughout the 1990s and 2000s that sexual

contact between men is often framed by men not as sex per se, but instead as play or *masti* (khanna 2005; Shah and Bondyopadhyay 2007). "Masti is a term used for same-sex behaviour between boys and men, in suburban and rural India. Men do have sex with each other. But it is not considered sex; it is just something you do in fun and play. People then get married and may continue to have masti later on" (Shah and Bondyopadhyay 2007, p. 34).

Masti as a mode of male friendship can be easily romanticised, most evidently in the theory of the continuum. However, the space of *masti* is always interrupted by the dual possibilities of hierarchy and equality, rape and intimacy, violence and consent, dependency and freedom, love/friendship or its lack. Male *masti* is also most usually premised on limited female mobility in and out of the domestic household. Hindi novelist Kamleshwar's (1932–2007) character Shivraaj, 16 years younger than bus driver Sarnaam Singh, wonders at what *point* does Sarnaam's love start to rot, at what *point* it ceases to be fun. A smooth continuum is not capable to understand the social life of *masti*. *Masti* makes sense only in a continuum that is knotted, irregular and made up of unpredictable *points*.

Lawrence Cohen noted that sex between men in North India—often locally understood in verbal pairs of doing/be done to, *karna/karwana*, eat/be eaten—has a strong presiding folkloric connection with

> stories of being raped or seduced by a friend of one's parents, by a real or fictive uncle, or by an employer...stories of bullying or ragging younger kids, or conversely of the sexual violence experienced by younger at the hands of older students, and more generally of sex between older and younger students in university hostels...stories of sex between officials—particularly the police—and younger men; and...stories of the famed licentiousness of the feudal landlords, or zamindars, in the rural hinterlands of the city (Bihar, east of Benares, in particular) and of their prodigious appetite for young men (1995, p. 417).

Masti can indeed be the moment which Cohen hints as collapsing "playfulness and penetration into a single coherent desire" but this coherence often faces interruptions (ibid., p. 401).[12] It can be riddled by shifting decisions about limits and confusions about what has passed beyond the threshold, into the excessive, into the disgraceful. At times, as Cohen suggests, *masti* teeters on the edges of the very contiguous lores of hierarchical and forced penetration, of *masti* that is not shared evenly by all its participants. At other times, *masti* is less about emotional intimacy or a sharing of sentiments and more about rituals of necessary brashness, of a hard-edged buddiness. Note that Mystic_Aswad's adages on male friendship, as quoted in the epigraph, are already very distinct from the mid-20th century cinematic conventions of male friendship which were depicted as sentimental and

[12] This tentative coherence, for instance, although of a kind achieved only when it is a "youthful affair", is hinted at by the Dewan of the small kingdom of "Chokkrapur" in colonial India, while talking with J.R. Ackerley who, on being recommended by his friend, the author E.M. Forster, served as the Private Secretary of the Maharajah there for about five months in 1923. With a slightly obsessive, almost anthropological interest in the customs of the people there, Ackerley often engaged the Dewan during his stay in conversations to that effect. The Dewan always obliged. Of one of these conversations, Ackerley wrote in his 1932 memoir *Hindoo Holiday: An Indian Journal*, that the Dewan and he "passed from that to talk of friendship, which he thought, was essentially a youthful affair. There had to be passion in friendship—though not necessarily sexual [and, the phrasing suggests, neither to the exclusion of the sexual]: and only boys were capable of that passion and enthusiasm. He himself," Ackerley wrote of the Dewan, "had had that passion in his youth, and the friend he had then was a staunch friend still" (Ackerley 1983, p. 207). During his stay, Ackerley also developed short friendships with the 16 year old Sharma and the 20 year old Narayan, servants of the Maharajah. Of one evening with Narayan he writes in the same memoir, "he suddenly laughed softly and drew me after him. And in the dark roadway, overshadowed by trees, he put up his face and kissed me on the cheek. I returned his kiss; but he at once drew back, crying out: 'Not the mouth! You eat meat! You eat meat!' 'Yes, and I will eat you in a minute,' I said, and kissed him on the lips again, and this time he did not draw away" (ibid., p. 218).

emotionally ripe bonds as in *Dosti*. A customary avoidance of explicit utterances of mutual care in *masti* frames the language of sentiment or enthrallment as bordering on the pathetic, the excessive and the shameful. It is that going beyond the *point*.

Moreover, *masti* re-cites a history of social insults around anal penetration and male effeminacy. *Gaandu* is the common Hindi invective for the one who gets fucked, *gaand* is a cruder word for the arse. *Chhakka*, literally a sixer, is used to deride male effeminacy, in schools, on streets and on internet forums. The play within *masti* can diffuse the violent potential of such terms, using them only in playful and joking ways, but this usage is never lost and abruptly appears in contexts that are not mutual, that are out of one's control. Furthermore, *masti* always remains distinguishable from the idiom of *dil* (heart) or *pyar-mohabbat* (love) which comes close to romance, and is symbolically different from *just masti* by being enclosed within the pair, by its desired exclusivity and longevity, and its traffic not in the *elsewhere* but instead within and as the family unit, within and as marriage. Propped by all these variable distinctions, *masti* always means different things for different men. Penetration may often mark the border of the play within *masti*, that is, its crisis point of definition, where *masti* among friends ceases to be *masti*, where friends cease to be friends. Remember that arzoo asks for *masti* but "not too much hanky panky" (PR). Kamleshwar's Shivraj too is speculating about where to draw the line. It is such lines that disrupt the idea of continuum. "The boys and (to a lesser extent) men," Cohen writes, "who play around with friends their own age and of similar background must negotiate this mutual terrain of play" (Cohen 1995, p. 417). *Masti* is borne more out of this constant negotiation.

However, when raja from Brahmapur, Orissa invites "all m2m/ gay sex liking" people for "fun and masti" and for having "gay... sex with ur boy friend" (PR), he is simultaneously using and conflating at least four repertoires. His wishes are worked out

by a mixing of idioms, by a post-liberalisation media universe which has picked up these idioms and got them to collide in print and on screen. "[B]oy friend" is a straight lift from the almost common-sensical register of romantic love and relationships. "[G]ay" is a term of sexual identification straight out of magazines and films, out of pride marches and protests, and even out of clinics, businesses and agony-aunt columns. Widely available in the English media, 'gay' is also increasingly syndicated in Hindi media in both transliterated and translated versions. Additionally, raja's use of "m2m" is a both a reigning internet abbreviation for quickly indicating the male seeker/sought equation and a variation of MSM (Men who have Sex with Men), which is a functional term for describing the catchment area within HIV–AIDS health interventions in India during the last two decades. All these ways of understanding, of experiencing situations of same-sex desire work within the idiom of *masti*. They inform the space that it clears for such experiences.

This space of *masti*, thus, is certainly a provocation to metaphors like the continuum but it is also a holding back from it. It is the channel for the accommodating experiences and bandwidth of male friendship but it is always oddly placed in its relation to other forms of desire of men for men. It is at a tangent to the language of romance—*masti* always inhabits an interrupted time and scarcely projects into the shared future of a primary pair. Instead, it takes place in its interstices. It has an odd relation with gayness—*mast* itself is not an adopted identity, or a specific sexual orientation. It is not overdetermined by the medical or political registers. Furthermore, *masti* is also at a tangent to the social set-up of the family—it almost always happens outside the precincts of the familial and the socially necessary. Set in such interrelations that jostle with each other not slide, *masti* tells the fuller story of the idiom of friendship on PR.

4

The Art of Personal Narratives

Sexuality and Narration in Activism

The reason we sound loud is because we are breaking a deafening kind of silence. But there is nothing louder than silence…what will happen is that as people feel that the moment of shock has lessened, that the expectation of compulsory heterosexuality has lessened, that the consequences of an everyday course of sharing as you are comfortable when you are comfortable in the mainstream [have lessened], I think you will find that there are not a lot of gay people who want to run around talking about their sexuality everyday. *I mean we took these identities partly because we had to* (Gautam Bhan, anti-displacement and queer activist, on the television show *We the People*'s special edition, 'Being Gay: The Parents Story', 17 April 2011, emphasis mine).

ऐसा है, देखिये मैडम, के जो अपोज़ करने वाले हैं वो पहले बड़ों से तो निपट ले कि वो क्या करतें हैं अपने जीवन में, पहले अपनी आस्तीन में झाँक के देख लें, कानून बनाने वाले हि कानून तोड़ते हैं, पुराने आदि ज़माने से कहते हैं स्वय्मवर, अगर उस ज़माने में राईट दिया हुआ था पब्लिक ने, तो अब क्या मुसीबत है [applause] और सुनिए सुनिए वो जो जज बैठे हैं हाई कोर्ट में सुप्रीम कोर्ट में, वो माँ नहीं है, वो दादी नहीं हैं, वो भावनाएं उनमे नहीं हैं, जो हमारे में हैं, हमने इनको जनम दिया है, हम चाहते हैं कि ये अपनी मर्जी से जियें, मैं चाहती हूँ, मैं इसकी दादी हूँ, मगर मैं रूड़ीवादी नहीं हूँ, अरे वो जापान में सारे बह गए पांच मिनट में, वहाँ गे ढूंढ लो और दुसरे ढूंढ लो, उनको ढूँढने जाओ और मुझे बताओ कितने गे थे और कितने दुसरे थे, तो इनको जीने का हक़ दो, अगले पल में क्या हो कौन जानता है [It is like this, see madam, that

those who oppose must first tackle the grown-ups, see what they are up to, look into their own matters, those who make law are the ones who break it, even in the ancient times they had *syamwar*, if in those times the public had given this right, then what is the problem now (applause) and listen listen those judges who are sitting in the high court, in the supreme court, they are not mothers, they are not grandmothers, they do not have those feelings which we have, I am his grandmother, but I am not a reactionary, and *all those in Japan got swept off (by the tsunami) in five minutes, now go there and find the gay in them, and the others in them, go and find and tell me how many were gay and how many were others*, then give them (gesturing towards her grandson) the right to live, who knows what will happen the next moment]. (Rani Sharma, accompanied by her grandson, on the television show *We the People*'s special edition 'Being Gay: The Parents Story', 17 April 2011, emphasis mine).

In this book, I have used the idea of doubleness to mark that shadow which falls between the way sexuality is conceptualised and the way it is lived out. To mark the inevitable friction between the abstract theory and the more animated praxis of sexuality.[1] This chapter tells two stories—one, of the conceptual history of sexuality and another, of its more open-ended life in 20th and 21st

[1] In their influential article 'Figures of the Subject in Times of Crisis' (1995), Achille Mbembe and Janet Roitman (translator) studied the economic crisis in Yaoundī, the capital city of Cameroon. Although in an analytical context different from that of sexuality, they briefly use the idea of the double to mark the constant friction between how things are conceptualised and how they actually pan out in practice, how they are in supposition and how they are as process. "Fraudulent identity cards; fake policemen dressed in official uniform…forged enrollment for exams; illegal withdrawl of money orders; fake banknotes; the circulation and sale of falsified school reports, medical certificates and damaged commodities… *It is also a manifestation of the fact that, here, things no longer exist without their parallel. Every law enacted is submerged by an ensemble of techniques of avoidance, circumvention and envelopment which in the end, neutralize and invert the legislation. There is hardly a reality here without its double*' (Mbembe and Roitman 1995, p. 340, emphasis mine). To be alert to 'doubleness' is then to be able to see both the conceptual and the actual realities and constantly counterweigh one with the other.

century identity politics, with Indian LGBT activist publications as a particular example. One story traces how sexuality was first defined and largely moored within a sexological, psychoanalytic and medico-juridical history of ideas, and how these ideas travelled simultaneously in Europe and in the colonies. Another story tells how the everyday political life of this concept, often through the popular idioms of 'sexual orientation' and 'sexual identity', came to muddle those very definitional contours.

In this chapter, I am interested in outlining how the shape that the idea of sexuality acquired within the knowledge-intensive disciplines of sexology, psychoanalysis and colonial medical jurisprudence—where it began to look like one's inner, unchanging truth with corresponding finite physical symptoms, where it produced a sexual map that classified people as *homo* and *hetero*—both determined to some extent but was also interrogated by how the idea of sexuality travelled within the more uncertain and livelier terrain of identity politics and the stories that this politics sought to tell. It could be said that the first is the story of the archives, how a concept is stored and technically articulated, how it works disciplinarily as a form; the second is the story of the actors themselves, of how the concept actually travels with people, how they experience that form, how they speak of it, how it looks like in process. The first story is impossible and too bookish without the second, which is why the same chapter tells both. This second political and experience-oriented life story of the concept of sexuality opens it up, offsets its definitional certainties, and marks the relation between sexuality and the self as more complicated than what the doctor, psychoanalyst or colonial jurist would have had us believe.

This doubleness between the concept and praxis of sexuality becomes particularly visible when we focus on the sphere of narration. The second half of this chapter looks at the personal narratives within LGBT activist publications in India of the 1990s and 2000s. Through close readings, I find that these narratives become useful resources to speak of the doubleness of sexuality,

especially of how the concept of sexuality intersects with the needs and apparatuses of identity politics. These narratives do as much to establish sexuality-based subject positions as interrogate them. Rather than simply become evidence of some predetermined, unchanging gay and lesbian subjects and their particular lives, which to some degree might be said to be their avowed political goal, these narrations also make us see the intricate process whereby these subject positions evolve and are constructed, how they are adapted or given up, how they constantly change, how they are marked both by the intensity and banality of sexuality in people's lives (see Scott 1991). The narratives become the evidence of something which might at first seem counter-intuitive for the LGBT politics of visibility, but is also something that the activist–editors of these publications want to acknowledge—the fact that sexuality pans out in a complicated way in people's lives, and that it does not determine their life worlds either completely or in the same way always, that desire takes several forms and expressions, not all amenable to easy definition or minoritisation. That while a narrative might be defined formally as a 'gay narrative' for avowed political purposes, the doubleness of sexuality will ensure that the very act of narration and the text produced by the contributor will put that category of gay as much into a definitional crisis as it will seem to shape it and bring it into prominence, that it will use 'gay' but also exceed it. Sexuality always reveals its doubleness whenever it is made into narrative, whenever it is seen as a complex construction *through* narrative and not as a primal cause *of* narrative.

SEXUALITY: A SHORT HISTORY OF THE WORD-CONCEPT

In his book on the short history of the term, Joseph Bristow notes that *sexuality*, which is a "comparatively new term" has not always meant the same thing (2007, p. 2). Its meanings differed over time periods and according to the specific

institutional contexts in which it was articulated. The sense of the word sexuality "[i]n its earliest scientific usage...defined the meanings of human eroticism, and when marked by a prefix—such as bi, hetero or homo—the word came to describe *types of person who embodied particular desires*" (ibid., emphasis mine). This meaning was primarily indexical and classificatory and, within late 19th century sciences of sexology–psychoanalysis, meant that people were marked out according to the kinds of sexuality they were thought to have and, additionally, that they were thought to be both identifiable by a finite number of outer features and/or particular psychic make-ups, and isolable as a distinct group. This meaning started becoming accepted among the knowledge elite of various kinds—sexologists, doctors, criminologists, jurists, psychoanalysts, jailers—in late 19th and early 20th century Europe and America, simultaneously travelling through colonial libraries, government correspondence, clinics and law courts in South Asia, as this period saw an explosion of scientific, anthropological, juridical and sociological knowledge around sex (Foucault 1978; Weeks 1986; Bristow 2007; Arondekar 2009; Legg 2012).[2]

[2] Although the primary conceit in the word-concept of sexuality is indexical and classificatory, this did not exhaust all the ways in which the word was used. The other possible senses of the word also survived, such as "the quality of being sexual or having sex" or "recognition of or preoccupation with what[ever] is sexual" (Bristow 2007, p. 3). For instance, 'sexuality' when used in recent critical feminist scholarship and politics does not always invoke its function to mark people as heterosexual or homosexual, but instead mainly to mark their capacity for sexual pleasure and freedom of choice in sexual matters (see Sharma and Nath 2005). For one of the many examples of this common feminist usage of the word-concept of sexuality, see the work and publications of CREA which is a feminist, human rights organisation based in New Delhi since 2000 (http://www.creaworld.org/publications/publications). It was formed "by a group of development professionals who have been working in the diverse fields of reproductive rights, sexuality, violence against women, media and women's human rights" (http://www.iasscs.org/institution/other/crea, accessed on 23rd

More than simply denoting one's capacity to be sexual, the word-concept of sexuality spread through the possibility of that very modern question: what is your sexuality? In its possibility to become a criteria whereby people can be differentiated and recognised in that difference. Bristow recounts a watershed episode from the BBC arts editor J.R. Ackerley's memoir *My Father and Myself* (1992) to talk of the increasing frequency of this meaning of the word, and to awkwardly mark a phase where the concept could be said to have stepped out of libraries and into common experience. Ackerley recalls his bafflement at being asked by a friend shortly after the First World War in which he had fought: "Are you a homo or a hetero?" "I had," writes Ackerley, "never heard either term before…" but "there seemed only one answer" to this question. Even if he "did not care for the word 'homosexual' or any label", Ackerley claims that the term now enabled him to discern exactly where he stood on "the sexual map" (Bristow 2007, p. 4). This sexual map was the popular product of the immense body of sexological and psychoanalytical researches conducted and its immense literature produced in Europe, America and the colonial metropolises. This sexual map travelled in the libraries and clinics, in official comments of judges and doctors, in the reports of colonial medical jurisprudence professionals, in giant and often controversial sexological tomes and in government officials' correspondence. Already in its third edition by 1933, the book *Sexual Inversion* by the English physician and intellectual Havelock Ellis, who studied 'sexuality' most of his life, had the author mentioning that a colonial "officer in the Indian Medical Service assures me…that there cannot be the least doubt as to the frequency of *homosexuality* among women in India, either inside or outside gaols" (1933, p. 208,

July, 2016.). Its training sessions, books and pamphlets all predominantly use this non-classificatory sense of the word. They use 'sexuality' to further women's freedom, consent and pleasure in sexual matters. The taxonomic sense does retain some situational purchase but never becomes the principal meaning.

emphasis mine). Remember that the 1920s and 1930s was also the time when Ugra's friend Ramnath Lal 'Suman' was quoting Havelock Ellis, and Ismat Chughtai was reading Freud, marking a transnational territory for this sexual map. Both Ackerley's common experience and Ellis's confident usage of the concept in a book length study had behind it almost 50 years of many specific branches of knowledge "inducing [sex] to speak of itself, for listening, recording, transcribing, and redistributing what is said about it" (Foucault 1978, p. 34).

The words 'homosexuality' and 'heterosexuality' themselves first appeared in the English language in the 1892 translation of the Austrian sex researcher Richard von Krafft-Ebing's *Psychopathia Sexualis* (Bristow 2007). This sexual map continued to provide the fundamental terms of study and data collection for researchers that were to gradually also mark the popular imagination for viewing and classifying human sexual behaviour, an imagination that was mobile and stretched erratically from the Antarctic to the Indian Ocean. In the year 1912, the British writer E.M. Forster and his friend Goldsworthy Lowes Dickinson were travelling to India for the first time. During this trip, as they became familiar with the maharajah of Chhatarpur (now in Madhya Pradesh), Dickinson wrote quite matter of factly, seamlessly invoking the classificatory function of the term, that it "soon turned out that *he* [the maharajah] *was homosexual*, in a curious (or not curious) way which combined what would be called perverted sexuality with philosophic and religious curiosity and yearning" (in Aldrich 2008, p. 276, emphasis mine). It was clear that the sexual map was gaining ground beyond the libraries, courts and clinics. By the late 1940s, Alfred C Kinsey's immensely popular and controversial *Sexual Behaviour in the Human Male* (1948) placed male sexual experience on a zero to six scale from exclusive 'heterosexuality' which was zero to exclusive 'homosexuality' which was six. When he died in 1956, the *New York Times* reported that he had already "gained world-

wide fame for his books" (August 1956). His terms and concepts in the Kinsey reports on male and female sexual behaviour had become, in the words of the then president of Indiana University, "part of the scientific heritage of the entire world" (ibid.). Around the time he died, Kinsey's 800-page volume on male sexuality had already sold about 500,000 copies and Kinsey himself had become part of popular culture, appearing on the cover of *Time* magazine in the early 1950s. Talking of the immense popularity of Kinsey reports, the magazine reported that booksellers had not seen sales like this since Margaret Mitchell's *Gone With the Wind* (1936).

Wherever the Kinsey report went, there went his terms and those frames of thinking. "As a onetime student of insects, Kinsey had set out to apply the 'taxonomic approach' to human beings. This involves studying a 'series of individuals' large enough to stand as 'representatives of the species'" (*Time*, March 1948). Sexuality was becoming popular as something that could denote specific identifiable *species* of people based on their desires. Though his findings in both the reports were as much about how singular terms—homosexual or heterosexual—cannot exhaust or even adequately describe the template of sexual experiences spread over individual lives, the terms themselves gained a popular function of classification, a species-making function, quite independent of his findings and the peculiar confusions of his research team. 'Sexuality' as a simple, portable frame of understanding and classifying people as obviously diffferent travelled easily. The question that had baffled Ackerley—are you a homo or a hetero?—was already less baffling. The sexual map had gained enough ground.

Three years before the 1969 Stonewall riots[3] in New York City,

[3] The Stonewall riots were a series of violent protests by transgender, lesbian, gay and bisexual people, and others, against the police raid on the Stonewall Inn in Greenwich Village in New York City on the morning of 28 June 1969. In his book *City Boy: My Life in New York During the 1960s and '70s*, Edmund White wrote that "everything changed with the Stonewall uprising...[a]nd

there had appeared an unsigned article in *Time* that was already responding to the "relatively new phenomenon" of the "so-called homophile groups" in the United States (January 1966). These groups used the identifiability (as a species) and isolability (as a minority) implicit in the concept of homosexual as a political tool to fashion a politics of sexual identity. Being then the sounding board for middle class respectability in the United States, *Time* published this article with a fear-mongering title 'The Homosexual in America', and its author worried that homosexuality "today… is not only mentioned; it is freely discussed and widely analyzed" (ibid.). Talking of "homosexuality", the writer said that it "deserves no encouragement, no glamorization, no rationalization, no fake status as minority martyrdom, no sophistry about simple differences in taste" (ibid.). So the sexual map now not only consisted of 'homosexuals' and 'heterosexuals'—terms which had long enjoyed provenance in scientific literature, were connected to and, invigorated by these scientific credentials—it also came to soak in emergent terms of sexual identity such as 'gay' and 'straight'. These terms were already popular enough a reality for the author in 1960s America who worried about "[h]omosexual ethics and aesthetics…staging a vengeful, derisive counterattack on what deviates call the 'straight' world" (ibid.).

Doctors, psychoanalysts and psychiatrists populate the entire article with research being cited, ideas being bandied and observations being made on sexuality. "P]sychoanalysts," s/he

it wasn't all those crewnecked white boys in the Hamptons and the Pines who changed things, but the black kids and Puerto Rican transvestites who came down to the Village on the subway (the 'A-trainers')…" (2009, p. 51). In his essay 'Fugitive Flesh: Gender Self-determination, Queer Abolition, and Trans Resistance', Eric A. Stanley writes that Stonewall was "a blast of radical collectivity, trans/gender-non-conforming folks, queers of color, butches, drag-queens, hair-fairies, homeless street youth, sex workers, and others took up arms and fought back against the generations of oppression that they were forced to survive" (2011, p. 2).

noted, are dexterously studying the cause of "homosexuality" or "are busy treating wives who have suddenly discovered a husband's homosexuality" (ibid.). The author refers to a "consensus" in "current psychoanalytic theory" to talk about what makes people "homosexual". Talking about this cause of homosexuality, s/he gives her/his American readers a stunted lesson in Freud. "The consensus," s/he says, "is that it is caused psychically, through a disabling fear of the opposite sex", of "normal sexual development" having gone astray during childhood. However, to the question "is homosexuality curable?" the author says "Freud thought not". S/He is troubled by this ambiguity of the medical and psychoanalytic profession about whether homosexuality can be or should be cured, because this ambiguity was rich ground for the political groups to claim the naturalness of 'homosexuality' and its proud adoption through various terms such as 'homophile', 'gay' or 'lesbian'. "Kinsey had a lot to do with this," the author grudges, "for to him all sexual pleasure was equally valid. 'The only unnatural sex act,' he said, 'is that which you cannot perform.'" (ibid.)

Homophile groups, such as the Mattachine Society formed in Los Angeles in the early 1950s and Daughters of Bilitis formed in San Francisco in 1955, picked up enthusiastically on the open-endedness of a lot of psychoanalytic and scientific material on 'homosexuality,' understood not simply as a disease or a perversion but as a valid psychic and bodily difference of taste, as a matter of just having a different sexuality. This marked the passage of a more technical and so-called scientific idea of sexuality to its more public appropriation within the language and politics of sexual identity. The element of difference implicit in the concept of sexuality had ready political usage. It lent itself to being framed politically. A difference of sexuality could be rhetorically staged to outline a suffering minority, made into a premise for fighting non-acceptance and injustice within the social, which is to say that the concept of sexuality could be instrumentalised for the larger desire for pride and selfhood

in and as sexual identity. The guiding idea of equality between 'different' people could be used once sexuality as a differential criterion had been established in popular usage with a scientific credence, even if haphazard. Members of the Mattachine Society put picket lines outside the White House to speak against the exclusion of open homosexuals from the armed forces, civil services and the government's Poverty Program. "[B]orrowing a device from the civil rights movement," the author of the *Time* article noted, "homophiles have even issued lapel buttons bearing a small equality sign (=) on a lavender background" (1966). The sexual map of *homo* and *hetero* lent itself to political rhetoric, lent itself to the emergent cartographies of public sexual identities of gay, lesbian and straight largely as markers of selfhood.

In the late 1960s, when the Indian photographer Sunil Gupta was about 14 or 15, he used to hang out with his sister at the "most notorious place in Delhi", The Cellar, the city's first nightclub that was started outside a hotel (Doctor 2009). Supposed to be chaperoning his sister, he recalls, he was usually "given a Coke and told to sit in a corner seat" (ibid.). Sunil recalls hearing conversations in the club that were his first introduction to the sexual map of gay and straight. "They said, did you know that guy there is gay?" (quoted in Doctor 2009). "He had heard about gays from magazines brought by Berkeley students who were paying guests with his family in Delhi. 'They had gay personals ads, and while the students weren't gay, I could talk with them about it'" (ibid.). The sexual map being a glib idiom travels fast and through no particular centre–periphery distribution, but via a confusing transnational geography—with Berkeley students, with magazines, with Hollywood gossip, with popular news about scientific research such as Kinsey's or legal events such as Wolfenden's report,[4] with peripatetic

[4] The Wolfenden Report was a 1957 study by the Committee on Homosexual Offences and Prostitution in Great Britain, named after its chairman Sir John

authors such as Forster, with the colonial and post-colonial middle classes familiar with English perusing their copies of *Time*, their newspapers and literature, and their libraries' dirty corners on modern medicine, sexology and psychiatry. The Indian Psychoanalytic Society, comprising both British and Indian elite, was trafficking in staple ideas of psychoanalysis and participating in its international debates. Indian authors such as Ismat Chughtai, Pandey Bechan Sharma 'Ugra' and Ramnath Lal, among several others, were engaging with the sexological and psychoanalytic ideas of homosexuality. The idiom of the homosexual and gay/lesbian had long been part of the imaginative horizon of several in South Asia, their access to the term and concept mediated, at least till the 1980s and 1990s, by questions of familiarity with language and degrees of cultural capital. After those decades, the terms gay, lesbian or homo exploded more erratically and profusely, often crossing class and language lines and becoming what could be called and experienced as Hindi or Marathi or Punjabi words.

In studying the different scales of what she calls "transnational 'queerdom'" in order to locate "Lesbian and 'Lesbian' Identitary-Positionalities in Delhi in the 1980s," Paola Bacchetta interrogates the American "from-Stonewall-diffusion-fantasy" and locates different forms of avowedly 'lesbian' activism in 1980s Delhi within complex local, national and transnational genealogies. This involved the movement of several actors and ideas more haphazardly than is usually imagined (2002). For instance, in speaking of how the term 'lesbian' worked within the larger context of the Indian women's movement in the 1980s, where it was proudly (and often privately) adopted by a few, contested

Wolfenden, that recommended that private homosexual liaisons between consenting adults be removed from the purview of criminal law. It is noteworthy that the report used findings from the discipline of psychoanalysis. Legislation that implemented these recommendations was enacted in the Sexual Offences Act (1967) of Great Britain.

and qualified by some and ignored by many, she speaks of a group of women activists who politicised the term 'Single Women', deciding to use that term rather than 'lesbian', but who in their actual organising praxis also transacted in the ideas of homosexuality and of being lesbian. This marked a new activist provenance of the concept of sexuality and sexual identity in 1980s Delhi:

> ...they organized the first workshop (called "Single Women") in which "lesbian" relations were discussed at an annual national Indian Women's Movement conference, in 1990 in Calicut. They [also] led the first passage of a national Indian Women's Movement resolution stating that all women have the right to sexual choice [in 1994 in Tirupathi]... They confronted the state in agitations against IPC 377. And they inserted their politics transnationally in a public statement against "the assumption of heterosexuality and the marginalization of lesbians at the Indian preparatory assembly for the 1995 World Conference on Women in Beijing (Abha, personal communication, 13 February 1998)" (ibid., p. 967).

Gayatri Reddy isolated two events that quickened the popularisation and the partial spread of this sexual map in India. One was the establishment in 1990 of the "first magazine for *alternative sexualities*, *Bombay Dost*" (2006, p. 217, emphasis mine). This, in addition to "the public *gay* persona" of its chief editor Ashok Row Kavi, sealed the wider penetration of the idiom of sexual identity that framed people as gay and straight (ibid., emphasis mine). Locating Row Kavi, she also highlights that "[f]ollowing the public recognition of an 'AIDS crisis' in the 1990s," there was "the establishment of several sexual health/*gay* advocacy groups in India—at least twenty by 2002" (Reddy 2006, p. 217, emphasis mine). These AIDS advocacy groups became spaces where the sexual map and its terms of homo and hetero, gay and straight were both used and popularised, often across class lines, but also found wanting for any easy application in South Asia. Reddy locates the second major reason for the

expansion of the sexual map in India in the liberalisation of the economy beginning in the early 1990s, one that "greatly increase[ed]...the transnational traffic in persons, signs and images" (ibid.), a process for which Bacchetta had already written little pre-histories in the 1980s. Liberalisation meant that foreign satellite television came to middle and upper class India and, by the end of the first decade of this century, had exploded on to the screens of more than half of the country's households (Bajaj 2007). Releasing its grip over broadcasting after almost 50 years, the Indian government opened the floodgates for a slew of domestic and global media companies like the News Corporation, The Walt Disney Company and Sony Entertainment which now offered hundreds of channels to Indian television viewers. A deregulated television industry meant an unprecedented upheaval in things that could be seen and talked about. Specifically, lesbian and gay characters, gay jokes, news items on LGBT rights, or serious documentaries and researched features on homosexuality became common, not only within English programming but, most excitingly for a genealogist of ideas, among local language programming including comedy, news and soap operas.

Writing in the early 1990s, Ashok Row Kavi could use the term off this criss-crossing sexual map to confidently define sexual behaviour and cultural formations in India: "There have always been opportunities for *gay* sex but the point is that it is now a movement, that it is an evolving *gay* culture' (in Reddy 2006, p. 218, emphasis mine). A series of urban social groups, NGOs, scattered media references and extended friend circles could be viewed already as making up some kind of gay culture, a category that was then seen fulfilling the larger desires for selfhood, both as individuals and as community. "Changes over the last decade have been dramatic," Gautam Bhan wrote of the period between the mid-1990s and mid-noughties, "a movement has emerged, rights have been advanced, attitudes (at least in urban India)

are changing" (Bhan 2008). The mid- to late 1990s saw the establishment of lesbian support groups and helplines like Sangini in Delhi, of gay social networking groups like Delhi's Humrahi, Bangalore's LGBT support group Good as You, Bombay's Gay Bombay, and NGOs working on sexual health and AIDS all over the country that openly used the language of male homosexuality in its research publications.

The February 1999 edition of *Darpan*, the privately distributed magazine of the gay group Humrahi in Delhi, told its readers that the group "meets every Saturday from 7:00 – 8:30 pm at D-45 Gulmohar Park, New Delhi (office of The Naz Foundation [an NGO working on HIV-AIDS prevention])" (personal copy). "The meetings," it said, "provide a congenial atmosphere to discuss problems relevant to *us* like marriage pressures, social and cultural stigma, and provide a support group for those who need it. It also helps in networking and meeting like minded people" (ibid., emphasis mine). What is most interesting is that there were always sizeable criss-crossing connections and doublings between the members of these gay support groups, AIDS-based NGOs, lesbian help lines, writers within media getting the word out there, and those who frequented privately organised LGBT parties at farm house and discotheques in metropolitan cities and adjoining areas. At once dispersed in countless cruising spaces and an isolable network of three-degree connections, what went under the name of 'gay culture' between the late 1980s and early 2000s was actually the uncertain movement of an idiom, of the sexual map staking claim to common sense.

It was in this larger context that the legal amendment of Section 377 of the Indian Penal Code was being pushed through by the Naz Foundation. The AIDS Bhedbhav Virodhi Andolan (AIDS Anti-discrimination Campaign, ABVA) had filed a petition in 1994 challenging the constitutional validity of the anti-sodomy provision to facilitate work such as distribution of condoms among jail inmates. By the time the petition came up for hearing,

the group had already disbanded. After this, in 2001, the Naz Foundation challenged the section under constitutional articles on equality, on equality on the basis of sex, on freedom of speech and expression, and on the right to privacy and health. This it did in order to remove legal obstructions for its community health interventions, especially AIDS awareness, among 'vulnerable' groups like MSM and hijras. In 2006, Voices against 377, a Delhi-based coalition of human rights, women's rights and children's rights groups, filed an intervention in the court in support of the Naz Foundation petition. These hearings led to the watershed reading down of the section by the Delhi High Court bench in July 2009, a judgement that was reversed by the apex court 4 years later.

Over these years, the activists and lawyers have worked out a legal, political and socio-cultural use of the sexual map. Always believed to be invested with distinct, unalterable rights, the democratic-citizen subject would now have to have an expanded template of rights that would now include sexuality. Sexuality, within the legal language, would be understood as one of the several distinct attributes of the individual, framed as her or his right. Within a larger political language catered to the form of 'democracy', a form which always needs constituencies to represent, the idea of the homosexual would work to provide a readymade constituency. In talking of minority rights or the rights of the LGBT community, the activists would further mobilise this group function of the sexological–psychoanalytic idea of the homosexual, 'homosexuals' as particular, quantifiable minorities which can be seen and represented. Finally, within its larger socio-cultural usage by the activists, the concept of sexuality would be geared as the basis of a proud selfhood that could be staged, both in public and personal contexts.

What has happened in this last decade in India tells us something very interesting about how this idea is used in law. A select group of activists and lawyers evoked an old anti-sodomy

law that was outside mainstream public memory and legal usage as the placeholder of all the discrimination and injustice faced by people who desire the same sex (for more, see khanna 2010). They have momentarily fetishised this law to discuss the terms of themselves as legal citizen subjects. In doing so, they have entered into a sort of contract with the legal language, with its way of seeing things. They have taken a conscious political step of framing all the people they speak for in a language that is best suited for legal redressal, of minority citizen subjects with sexuality as a right. "I mean we took these identities partly because we had to" (Bhan on the television show *We the People*'s special edition, 'Being Gay: The Parents Story', 17 April 2011).

When approached by the members of the ABVA, "'Dr. A.S. Paintal, until recently [then] Director General of the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) insist[ed] that homosexuality is alien to Indian culture" (interview with ABVA, October 1989 in *Less than Gay*; 1991, p. 32). What did Dr. Paintal mean here by "'homosexuality"'? Was he gesturing towards the absence of self-identifying gay and lesbian people in the long annals of Indian history? Was he suggesting the absence of same-sex sex, implying that no Indian has ever desired another Indian of the same sex, that such a thing has never happened within the geographical boundaries of the nation state? Through the 1990s and into the next decade, there was an immense Hindu right wing rhetoric in India that claimed vociferously that there is no homosexuality in India. Maharashtra's regional political party Shiv Sena's supremo Bal Thackeray in his response to Deepa Mehta's film *Fire* (1996), a film about the emotional and sexual relationship of two women in a lower middle class Hindu household, further curtailed this zone of no-homosexuality from the nation state to the Hindu households of the nation state. "Why does the story revolve around a Hindu family," he asked, "why has the filmmaker named the main characters Sita and Radha?" (Thackeray quoted in sawnet.org, December 1996). Stating that

his party would stop the attack on the cinema halls showing the film only if the director gave Muslim names to the two women, he remarked: "[c]ould not the filmmaker have named them Shabana, Saira or Najma…Fire may have received 14 international awards but will anyone deliberate on the harm these people are doing by *ushering in* a wretched culture' (ibid., emphasis mine).

Within this exclusionary Hindu-centric rhetoric, the quantifiability of same-sex desiring people as the homosexuals remained uncontested. This way it could figure easily as something localisable in space, something that could be ushered *in* or kept *out*. Homosexuality as a compact point of reference. This facilitated its mobilisation as something that could be imported from the west and as something we have to guard ourselves against. The large-scale activist response, not unsurprisingly, was then to prove the local existence of homosexuality, that homosexuals have always been around, that they are indigenous. "If this report," ABVA members wrote in *Less Than Gay*, "can expose the silly lie that homosexuality does not exist in India, or that gay people are a species from a different planet, we will feel our efforts rewarded" (*Less Than Gay* 1991, p. 4). "Finding our voice is the beginning of our politics," Narrain and Bhan wrote, "for it is in *the naming of ourselves* that we begin to question the cultural, social and political basis of those that seek to invisibilize us" (Narrain and Bhan 2005, p. 2, emphasis mine). A momentous reply was orchestrated to deal with a series of such crisis points—there is homosexuality in India. There was an underlining sharing of concept—homosexuality—even in this theatre of conflict between the activists and Hindu right wing groups; both zoned in on the same set of references and terms in their engagement with journalists and in the courts, differing only on the question of the correct location and of the social value laid on the concept. The sexual map itself was taken for granted, at least nominally.

AND AFTER FREUD

One of my teachers in Delhi, Udaya Kumar, used to explain the concept of the Freudian unconscious with an image. He would draw a horizontal white line on the blackboard which was meant to be the ground. Then making a slight gash in the line, he talked of a burial. A burial of things, memories, doubts, objects, kingdoms, etc., which were all marked by a chalk smudge a little below the line, to be understood as the proverbial six feet under. Then, a little unpredictably at first, he rubbed the gash and made the horizontal line continuous as before. In a fairly simple move the unconscious was explained as that which was buried and whose burial was subsequently forgotten, the chaste continuity of the dividing line reappearing. The unconscious is, as it were, at a remove from us by a burial and a consequent forgetting of that burial. It was, moreover, placed within a vertically arranged spatial schema with an apparent *above* and a hidden *under*.

This burial/forgetting-of-burial schema is necessary for the imaginative constitution of the unconscious. The unconscious is in some sense imagined into being through this story of its making. The story is akin to a genesis myth that talks of beginnings which serve to explain what follows. The unconscious is also internalised by this story. Always inside, below, under, it is allocated a specific place within what is undeniably a spatial schema.

Spatially inflected language of *repression* of desires or of wishes being driven *underground* or *behind* is frequent in Freud. There is the architectural metaphor of the building: "A prominent piece of the dream is to be seen in the phantasy of revenge against her father, which stands out like a *facade* in front of the rest" (Freud 1905a, p. 152, emphasis mine). Or that of spatial obstruction of view, "*screened* by these thoughts of revenge..." (ibid., emphasis mine) Examples of pearls in oyster shells is not unknown. The unconscious thereby assumes the role of the vast reservoir which contains the materials it is thought to contain: hidden intentions, repressed memories, unspoken desires and doubts. Access to

this reservoir is now only accidental or occasional. Dreams are explained as an experience of an interface with this something inside us, as an intermittent access to this reservoir. The slips of the tongue give us a clue of the secrets stored inside this space, a space which is basically metaphorical. "Like every metaphor, this metaphor suggests something, makes some thing visible" (Althusser 1971).[5]

What could have been difficult to explain as acts of manifest intention now find an explanation from the inside, as it were. Invisible to us and yet internal to us, always controlling our actions and giving a clue of what we might be really thinking about, the concept of the unconscious has a seductive explanatory power. The space that it is thought to occupy—the internal recesses of our mind, itself discursively established—is no less the grounds of this indubitable position that the unconscious enjoys. Freudian psychoanalysis "bases its own dictatorial power upon the dictatorial conception of the unconscious" (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, p. 18). The unconscious, Deleuze and Guattari argue, is ingeniously located within an "arborescent system" that is a vertically

[5] As an example of how basic spatial metaphors often influence our critical understandings of the people and processes in the world around us, note Althusser's reading of Marx's topographical, "spatial" metaphor of the economic *base* and the superstructure that has had a long, influential and contested history. "Marx conceived the structure of every society," Althusser writes, "as constituted by 'levels' or 'instances' articulated by a specific determination: the infrastructure, or economic base (the 'unity' of the productive forces and the relations of production) and the superstructure, which itself contains two 'levels' or 'instances': the politico-legal (law and the State) and ideology (the different ideologies, religious, ethical, legal, political, etc.)...It is easy to see that this representation of the structure of every society as an edifice containing a base (infrastructure) on which are erected the two 'floors' of the superstructure, is a metaphor, to be quite precise, a spatial metaphor: the metaphor of a topography (topique)...Like every metaphor, this metaphor suggests something, makes some thing visible. What? Precisely this: that the upper floors could not 'stay up' (in the air) alone, if they did not rest precisely on their base." (Althusser 1971).

arranged "hierarchical system…with *centres* of significance and subjectification" (ibid., p. 16, emphasis mine). Primarily to disrupt Freud's spatial schema for imagining its human subject, the two French philosophers devise the image of the "rhizome", which is a root with tentacles moving unpredictably in different directions. With the rhizome they counter the arborescent image of standing trees in Freud, where roots move towards a singularly imagined *below*. "We're tired of trees…[w]e should stop believing in trees, roots and radicles. They've made us suffer too much" (ibid.). This interiorised unconscious placed in an arborescent structure, Deleuze and Guattari explain, becomes the basis of the formation of the human subject in Freud.

The discipline of Discursive Psychology, in line with Deleuze and Guattari's observations in *Anti-Oedipus* (1972) and *A Thousand Plateaus* (1980), argues that "phenomena, which traditional psychological theories have treated as 'inner processes', are, in fact, constituted through social, discursive activity" (Michael Billig quoted in Kulick 2000, p. 274). Accordingly, these discursive psychologists argue that "psychology should be based on the study of this acentered outward activity rather than upon hypothetical, and essentially unobservable, inner states" (ibid.). They refuse to take this all explaining story of the 'inner' for granted.

Freud, however, built an entire system of thought on these unobservable, inner states. He made sense of human sexual behaviour and desires by setting them in the story of these inner states. In his *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality* (1905b), he elaborates on the *diphasic* model of the development of the normal heterosexual subject who has to pass through the stages of the Oedipus complex and the castration complex to attain this normal sexual maturity (Bristow 2007, pp. 62–83). Freud built an elaborate developmental Oedipal plot of sexual identifications and withdrawals which the growing subject has to undergo vis-à-vis her/his mother and father. This growing human subject, which

was usually cast as male, is caught in, and her/his sexuality is determined by, this limited Oedipal triad of "daddy, mommy and me" (Deleuze and Guattari 1984, p. 101). Freud was, however, using traditional sexological categories like heterosexual and homosexual, used by sexologists such as Richard von Krafft-Ebing (1840–1902), and providing naturalised developmental plots—Oedipus complex and Castration complex—for attaining only one of these: heterosexuality. The heterosexual subject was the canny outcome of this Freudian plot of 'normal' maturity of the human ego with its imagined Oedipal drives. Once the story was spun, all its variations could only appear as aberrations. The homosexual subject more or less appeared as a 'sexual aberration' within this naturalising schema, the story that Freud picked up from Sophocles. The homosexual was the result of the Oedipal plot misfiring.

Freud argued for a 'psychic bisexuality', germs of which, he mused, could be primordially present inside each one of us and which have to be progressively filtered to attain normal sexual life. The condition of being homosexual was thus referred back to an inner state of drives, germs, innateness, beginnings which, we have seen, informs the language and the space of the unconscious. Based on this, Freud could contend that "[t]he sexual life of each one of us extends to a slight degree—now in this direction, now in that—beyond the narrow lines imposed as the standard of normality" (1905a, p. 84). This contention, however, was worked out on the basis of attributing aberrant "perversions" to "a development of germs all of which are *contained in* the undifferentiated sexual disposition of the child, and *which by being suppressed or by being diverted* could become sources of creative energies for a 'great number of our cultural achievements'" (ibid., emphasis mine). "When, therefore, anyone has *become* a gross and manifest pervert, it would be more correct to say that he has *remained* one, for he exhibits a certain stage of *inhibited development*" (ibid., emphasis mine).

What sexology only described, psychoanalysis interiorised. The homosexual subject is here irrevocably made the matter of a deep inner. Her story is explained by this story of the inside. Psychoanalytic language used figures of contained in, germs, suppression, inhibited development, etc. While the heterosexual subject emerging from here follows the *correct* route of development and attains normalcy, the homosexual subject is unable to do so and remains what he primitively was.[6] In the homosexual, Freud wrote, "the...germs of heterosexual tendencies" are "blighted" ([1935] 1960, p. 423). In his letter to an American mother in April 1935, he wrote that homosexuality "is nothing to be ashamed of, no vice, no degradation; it cannot be classified as an illness" (ibid.). Despite these admissions, he stuck to his base conceit of heterosexuality as the main story and homosexuality as a digression, as a "variation" (ibid., p, 424).

This Freudian narrative of the homosexual was effectively an epic myth worked out in scientific prose. It was a story of hoary origins told as a rational endeavour. A mythology usually involves supernatural forces, for instance, the playfulness of Greek deities, the miraculous abilities of Indic epic heroes, or the spirit world in Shamanism. Even those agents performing the burial of the unconscious in Udaya Kumar's drawing, which themselves remained invisible on the blackboard, make sense only within

[6] This developmental model which places 'heterosexuality' over 'homosexuality' would be strangely persistent. Vinay Chandran and Arvind Narrain quote a sexologist from present-day Bangalore: "In another case, a patient told me that he was standing in a bus and another man with his erect penis poked him. I told him that he should not feel guilty that he had enjoyed. I instead told him that he was going to have better and better enjoyment once he got more and more involved with girls. If you are riding a cycle you are happy just riding it. But once you know that a scooter is better than cycle you would prefer to ride it" (quoted in Chandran and Narrain 2005, p. 60). The Freudian homosexual is a secondary and more primitive creature than the fully developed and more advanced heterosexual subject, much like the story that relates the cycle to the scooter.

a mythical frame. A myth is a narrative usually located at the beginnings of things, and it becomes an aetiological framework for the things which follow, for instance, the Biblical Genesis as causing human life. The myth is an explanatory tactic. It becomes the launch pad that is itself outside history, as it were, in epic time, but accounts for the consequent unfolding of historical events, of the drama of personal lives. The myth proceeds by constructing a primal "outside realm", a realm which defies any rigorous tracing of an idea, any effort at a connected genealogy (Derrida 1972, p. 40). It works with this moment of an aprioiri. It justifies whatever follows by modeling it through this apriori. The Biblical story of Adam and Eve, for instance, among other things, is a myth of gender, of man and woman, of what each is made of and how each behaves. It postures as a primal model of relationships. Freud's narrative arranged his apriori, the mysterious unconscious, in a thus mystified period of human adolescence, full of conflicts, iconic events and stress. In fact Freudian psychoanalysis produced the period of adolescence as particularly revealing, as brimming with consequences for the rest of one's life.

It is in the same vein that homosexual sexual orientation is a myth. A myth that accounts for the immediate directionality of desire towards one or the other person, towards one or the other gender. All its realisations, we note, are located at the beginnings, usually childhood or other *earlier* experiences which are later foregrounded, recounted within the situational trigger points that are personal narratives or psychoanalytic, counselling sessions. This makes sexual orientation into something specific, something traceable, a diachronic strand within an individual. Diverse moments of desire are linked to it only as its 'manifestations'—the etymon of the verb is Latin *manifestare* which is to reveal or to disclose; it is as if a particular sexual orientation was always, already present there, only waiting for such revelations or disclosures. Within this scheme, the

moment of *coming out* is inevitably seen as the first expression and a personal or public avowal of this diachronically imagined sexual orientation. Sexuality as sexual orientation is the product of an exercise in myth, another name for aetiology. It is a finding and ascribing of causes par excellence. "[T]he question of aetiology has functioned in discussions of homosexuality. That is, homosexuality, sadomasochism, prostitution, or boy-love are taken to be mysterious and problematic in some way that more respectable sexualities are not" (Rubin 1992, p. 290). Freud's work asserted that "a psychosexual aetiology holds good generally and without exception for hysteria" (1905a, p. 42). *When did you know that you were gay?* will produce an answer that will be aetiological in its drive and will make causative linkages between present moments of desire and an imagination of a primordially present inner state, the one or the other sexual orientation.

This Freudian theory, this mythical universe of adolescent misconnections, was on offer and seductively labelled as "consensus" in the article 'The Homosexual in America' (*Time* 1966). "The origins of this fear [of the opposite sex, and thus the attraction to the same]," it said in the Freudian vein, "lie in the homosexual's parents". "*[T]o attain normal sexual development*," it continued, "according to current psychoanalytic theory, a boy should be able to identify with his father's masculine role..." (*Time* 1966, p. 40, emphasis mine). This was the easy plot of the Freudian inflection of the Oedipal mythology. Despite Freud's doubts about the exact status of homosexuality, his key frames of 'arrested development' and his habit of using terms such as 'normal' and 'variation' lent this easy plot to be distilled and widely syndicated within popular imagination.[7]

[7] Sigmund Freud's 9 April 1935 letter in reply to an American mother reads: "Dear Mrs [erased], / I gather from your letter that your son is a homosexual. I am most impressed by the fact that you do not mention this term yourself in your information about him. May I question you why you avoid it? Homosexuality is assuredly no advantage, but it is nothing to be ashamed of, no vice, no

In talking of the popularisation of *the Freudian* in 1940s/50s America, Richard Dyer contended that "[t]he importance of the Oedipal phase accorded well with a society in which the notion of 'adolescence' as a distinctive life phase was already being emphasized" (2003, p. 113). Above all, Freud's narratives were doing something peculiar for popular thinking about same-sex desire. With plenty of misfiring Oedipal plots, the Freudian canon was giving "the central dramatic motif of the young man passing through a tormented rite of passage" something that was widely reproduced in cotemporary book covers, novel plots and underground films that had same-sex desiring characters (Dyer 2003, p. 113).

Homosexual desire in Freud had come to occupy the deepest rung in his spatial imagined subject. It is the innermost secret behind a series of screens and facades. The choice of these

degradation; it cannot be classified as an illness; *we consider it to be a variation of the sexual function, produced by a certain arrest of sexual development.* Many highly respectable individuals of ancient and modern times have been homosexuals, several of the greatest men among them (Plato, Michelangelo, Leonardo da Vinci, etc). It is a great injustice to persecute homosexuality as a crime—and a cruelty, too. If you do not believe me, read the books of Havelock Ellis. / By asking me if I can help, you mean, I suppose, if I can abolish homosexuality and make *normal heterosexuality* take its place. The answer is, in a general way we cannot promise to achieve it. In a certain number of cases we succeed in developing *the blighted germs of heterosexual tendencies*, which are present in every homosexual; in the majority of cases it is no more possible. It is a question of the quality and the age of the individual. The result of treatment cannot be predicted. / What analysis can do for your son runs on a different line. If he is unhappy, neurotic, torn by conflicts, inhibited in his social life, analysis may bring him harmony, peace of mind, full efficiency, whether he remains a homosexual or gets changed. If you make up your mind he should have analysis with me—I don't expect you will—he has to come over to Vienna. I have no intention of leaving here. However, don't neglect to give me your answer. / Sincerely yours with best wishes, / Freud / P.S. I did not find it difficult to read your handwriting. Hope you will not find my writing and my English a harder task" (emphases mine).

dramatic spatial metaphors, screens and facades, was Freud's. Finishing his analysis of Dora's second dream, Freud's footnote remarks on her love for Frau K. after having spoken about her phantasy of revenge against her father, of her revenge against Herr K. and thirdly, for her love for Herr K. "*Finally*," he writes, "we can see the action of the fourth and the *most deeply buried* group of thoughts—those relating to her love for Frau. K..." (1905a, p. 152). "I failed," he writes, "to discover in time and to inform the patient that her homosexual (gynaecophilic) love for Frau K. was *the strongest unconscious current in her mental life*...I had learnt of the importance of the homosexual current of feeling in psychoneurotics..." (ibid., p. 162). These are the Freudian tales that make possible an interiorised and distinct homosexual subject. In fact the homosexual subject was seen as closer to his own inner, primeval state. Homosexuality, and thereby heterosexuality, became irrevocably a matter of definition of the individual self thus told. In Freud's story it became something that was about the self's inner, deeper realities.

This base narrative in Freud would travel through popular culture, being parroted in various forms and guises. Already by the mid-1960s, Richard Dyer argues, "employing psycho-babble...was the standard, middle-class mode for comprehending the tensions of domestic life" (2003, p. 155). For instance, the American artist and film director Andy Warhol's short film *Kitchen* (1965) has male and female characters miming Freudian aphorisms to tackle their emotional conflict and domestic stress: "I've failed you. Both as a lover and mother I've failed you" or "Isn't a mother a boy's best friend?" (Dyer 2003, p. 156). With the popularisation of the Freudian terms of imagination of the self, the deep 'unconscious' had become a glib denominator of human motivations and desires, specifically when they had to do with the same sex.

Early "lesbian and gay" underground films in Europe and America would "often be constructed along lines similar to

the way that Freudian analysis construes dreams: unconscious thought processes seen as reworking elements from conscious perception (ibid., p. 113). "Objects and incidents" would become "highly charged emotionally and, especially, sexually"; "things" would be "substituted for other things", "places" would suddenly become "other places", unexpected images would be juxtaposed (ibid.). Early underground "gay and lesbian" films were preoccupied with subjectivity as subject matter, with the classic Freudian structure of taking a series of journeys into the self (ibid., pp. 114–15). The vast pool of the Freudian was supplying foundation metaphors, spatial imaginations and cinematic tropes for thinking about the self and specifically about the self as experiencing desire for the same sex.

This Freudian homosexual would in turn be politicised in sexuality rights movements. Activists would use this distinct psychologised status of the homosexual as grounds for an independent minority identity. Michael Warner notes the implication of gay and lesbian movements in a distinctly psychoanalytic vocabulary: "...the most rigorous and sophisticated language about sexuality is that of psychoanalysis, queer critics from the heady days of gay liberation onward have developed varieties of psychoanalytic radicalism" (Warner 1993, pp. xi–xii). In their newsletter *The Ladder* which was started in San Francisco in 1956, Daughters of Bilitis called themselves "A Woman's Organization for the purpose of Promoting the Integration of the Homosexual into Society" (Katz 1976, p. 426). Their mission statement, printed on the inside cover of issue of *The Ladder* until 1970 called on for the "[e]ducation of the *variant*...to enable her to understand herself and make her adjustment to society...this to be accomplished by establishing...a library...on the sex deviant theme; by sponsoring public discussions...to be conducted by leading members of the legal, psychiatric, religious and other professions" (ibid., emphasis mine). This same statement saw the group's "[p]articipation in research projects by duly authorized

and responsible psychologists, sociologists, and other such experts directed towards further knowledge of *the homosexual*" as being essential to their vision and practice (ibid., emphasis mine).

Early "gay" and "lesbian" activists, Warner writes, "traced the demands of lesbian and gay liberation to fundamental psychic structures: the preoedipal, innate bisexuality, the exchange of women, reverse oedipalization, the instability of identification" (ibid.). Within this psychoanalytically inflected idiom, sexuality becomes irrefutably a matter of the self, a way of accessing and defining this self. More specifically, homosexuality posed as the substance of this Freudian tiered self par excellence because, as we learned in the case of Dora, it was imagined as its deepest content. There was nothing truer than the homosexual. The basis of this idea was the architecture of the secret, the real game of psychoanalysis. What you always hide seems to be truer than what you show—nothing else would have driven Freud more than this maxim. When desire for someone of the same sex has to be concealed from the public eye and expressed only in peculiar ways, then it occupies a specialised place in the story-telling of these lives. When set in narrative situations like Freud's clinic, it becomes something like a hidden grail.[8] In Freud, it seems to become a term explaining sexual behaviour, as something that is the internal cause of *such* desires.[9] It gains the trust and precision of a technical term.

[8] "I gather from your letter," Freud wrote to the American mother, "that your son is a homosexual. I am most impressed by the fact that you do not mention this term yourself in your information about him. May I question you why you avoid it" (Freud 1935).

[9] Here, it seems that sexuality is first securely buried within the self. Conceptually, once it is buried, it lends itself more easily to be viewed as an innate right of this self, it facilitates a form of rights politics. "[A]ssertion of particular political subjectivities which legitimize their specific claims on some of their specific properties…[w]hen you justify your demands in some of your specific properties" (Zizek 1999). Sexuality became that specific property of the self. Something everyone has, one or the other kind, something everyone has the right to express, politically and personally. It is worth noting that such languages of sexuality rights and sexual identies had a wide transnational circulation,

DOUBLENESS IN ACTION: THE EVERYDAYNESS OF SEXUALITY IN POLITICAL ACTIVISM

Even as I note these important histories of the concept of sexuality, my main task in this chapter is to focus on its real time enactments, on its many deployments within activist praxis and within personal lives, where these conceptual histories are often qualified, and sometimes, even put into crisis. As an effect of the wide-scale interiorisation of the concept of sexuality and the social acclimatisation of it as a distinct content of the self, sexuality, activists could contend, is "about identity...about *self*-respect", invoking sexuality to stake a strong claim on the self's reality. At the same time, activism has also been the turf where this claim is placed in constant churning. Freud's baggage of an interiorised homosexual subject moves around a lot but often gets transformed and revised as it travels (Bhan 2008, emphasis mine).

In the political everyday, Freud's story does not simply take over. Here the many usages of sexuality do not neatly or consistently separate people into distinct groups or consider them innately different. The developmental peculiarity of the Freudian homosexual does not fully stand the test of everyday politics, is not simply duplicated in the dailiness of demanding rights.

evidenced in their usage by international bodies like the International Lesbian and Gay Association (ILGA, established in 1978, England) and International Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission (IGLHRC, established in 1990, U.S.A.), organisations that held consultative status with the United Nations. Within this widely circulating form, by sometimes emphasising on the naturalness of this thing called "sexuality", by implicitly claiming that it was somehow "within the person", and was being repressed by society and needs to be expressed, by often staging the idea as "beyond question", as somehow "scientific", activists could mobilise proud narratives of selfhood and use this alleged scientism of "sexuality" to invoke their own wider desires, that in turn opened up complex terrains of not just "sexuality" but also intimacy, desire, fear, touch, love, friendship, community, phobia or sex (khanna 2005, p. 93).

Instead, it is habitually contested, tactically used and situationally improvised. Early debates among Delhi's feminist sexuality activists verify this claim. Recounting his early involvement within sexuality activism in Delhi, in the years 2002–03, Gautam Bhan acknowledges the influence of the raw on-ground debates regarding the idea of intersectionality on how he and several of his peers viewed the term sexuality then and what work they made it do. He had just returned from the US where he had studied for his bachelors degree and found that the "first public language around sexuality was forming, among us, among a few journalists" (personal interview). He recalls what he terms as a "watershed" meeting at the office of the women's resource centre Jagori in those "early days" of sexuality activism in the city. This was the women's day planning meeting where some activists concerned about a spate of "lesbian suicides" in India had got together to discuss ways of tackling the matter.

Most of these activists were also friends. Gautam particularly recalls this meeting for his discussions with Delhi-based feminist and sexuality rights activists Jaya Sharma, Lesly Esteves and akshay khanna. "This was when we had tried to involve other women's groups in this issue of lesbian suicides and got to hear: you guys do it and we will support from the outside." Telling me of that moment, Gautam points out that there was "real anger" during that meeting. This anger was directed not only for what was happening out there, but also for the way the mainstream women's groups were treating the issue of these suicides. They did not understand it as a major issue to be taken up by "all feminists". Instead, it was framed as an 'LGBT' issue to be lent at times encouraging and mostly hesitant support from the outside. "We were frustrated with the LGBTness of it all then, in our own vocabularies" and with the political situations it created.

It was in response to this moment that debates around the idea of intersectionality grew amongst the Delhi activists. It was in response to such events that the doubleness of sexuality

could be unmistakably seen, where sexuality was made to work in ways beyond the simple minority politics of international NGOs. Writing about "same-sex sexualities in India" "through the prism of intersectionality", Jaya Sharma and Dipika Nath looked at sexuality as one of the many active "axes of construction and control" like gender, caste and religion (2005, p. 87). Sharma and Nath were writing about the early days of a non-funded, non-registered, feminist forum of individuals based in Delhi called PRISM that started in August 2001. The realisation of sexuality's constructedness was part of the dailiness of this group's political work and it was much discussed. It was common-sensical in their literature and public interventions.

PRISM had a "fluid", "unstructured" makeup whereby those interested in "the issues of gender and sexuality" and who saw themselves invested in social change around these issues came together as friends and colleagues, with temporary visitors from other cities and countries joining in too (ibid., p. 96). Their perspective on sexuality and on identities derived from it attested to its doubleness in political praxis. On the one hand, they recognised the "meaning that [sexual] identities" could provisionally hold for "individuals" and acknowledged that "for the sake of political action, especially in the face of violations of rights, identities are useful to mobilize people as communities and create a sense of solidarity and power" (ibid., pp. 88–89). On the other hand, they constantly talked about and resisted the "tendency" of identity-based politics "to create restrictive and homogenous concepts of community", realised that "sexuality" ran the possible danger of being "limiting", of becoming "exclusive" and "of creating hierarchies of oppression" (Sharma and Nath 2005, p. 88).

Sexuality was not simply adopted by political groups but always contested by their varying beliefs and dreams. Political activism around sexuality is not a name that can be given to any one group, institution or movement. It provisionally denotes an array of support groups, internationally funded development

NGOs, AIDS health and advocacy groups, cultural collectives, unregistered social groups, Queer Pride marches among others, all of which do not speak the same language or use the same terms to the same effect. "When we first articulated our [intersectional] mandate," Sharma and Nath wrote of PRISM, "we committed to work with and across a multiplicity of subjectivities, unlike most LGBT groups, which target specific sexual identities" (ibid., p. 86). They were trying to counter the tendency among middle and upper middle class social support groups like Delhi's Humrahi or Bombay's Gay-Bombay that "tend[ed] to be specific to particular identities", and usually did not question this premise in their bid to create safe spaces where gay men could meet and socialise. PRISM tried to cross-pollinate the work of organisations working on HIV/AIDS and male sexual health, like the Naz Foundation, that were often insular to feminist issues with the language and concerns of progressive feminist groups. PRISM tried to take stock of the complex array of groups and spaces in early 2000s Delhi and tried to respond to them with its take on the idea of sexuality—by initiating conversations over differences of vocabularies, funding patterns and methods. They were trying to expand the meanings of the term sexuality, the contexts that invoked it, the things which it referred to and the strategies that it implied.

PRISM used the term 'LGBT', Sharma and Nath remember, never as a neat or an unchanging air-tight entity but instead as shorthand for "a diverse range of subjectivities", dissimilar for different people, and dissimilar for the same person over time through changing experiences and spaces. Its members tried to *work in* their ideas with other organisations and spaces, especially during crisis points like the arrest of workers from AIDS-based NGOs like Bharosa Trust and Naz Foundation International in Lucknow.[10] In this constant cross-pollination, political activism

[10] In the section 'An Alliance Formed in Lucknow', Sharma and Nath highlight the possibility of an organic and wonderful alliance between AIDS

uses but also demystifies the classificatory function within the idea of sexuality. Within political praxis, *sexuality* does many kinds of work, has multiple entry points. Sexuality is always pegged on more than a single history of ideas. The concept exceeds its sexological–psychoanalytic history to make room for numerous political visions and practices.

"Jaya was the one who introduced me to the word and concept of intersectionality," Gautam recalls, "they had written an essay on the subject that was on LGBT list-serves for ages, that was affecting all our vocabulary and discussions". "I had helped Jaya and [co-author] Deepika edit that piece" that later came to be published online and in book form. "Using it, I remember we made the case for 'intersectionality' in a big way at the World Social Forum in Mumbai 2004" and in conversations with AIDS NGOs like Lucknow's Bharosa Trust and Naz Foundation International and with women's groups in Delhi. This was to really work out the 'overlap' among feminist, health and LGBT issues in a substantial, practical way. Not just add and stir. "For the longest time, in those early years," Gautam told me, "'intersectionality' for us was a short-hand for 'queerness', it did

NGOs focused officially on epidemiology and health outreach among the MSM, and progressive women's groups who try to open up questions of gender and sexual division of labour within society. They wrote that "[t]he relationship between Bharosa Trust, Naz Foundation International and Lucknow women's organizations began when the workers of these two NGOs were arrested in 2001. The women's organizations rushed to the rescue of the workers, though they had little exposure to LGBT issues. The relationship has grown in wonderful, organic ways since then. The young men from these two NGOs attend all the major public events organized by the women's organizations, providing whatever support they can. Working with the women's groups, they are now involved in anti-communalism activism as well (a big change, since their groups had been exclusively focused on MSM sexual behaviour). One of the women's organizations recently conducted a gender training programme with the *kothis* linked to Bharosa Trust, exploring issues such as roles and power within relationships" (Sharma and Nath 2005, p. 95).

the same work". Sexuality was not treated as a simple identity that could be "added and stirred" with other issues, or simply respected as choice or difference, it had to be read back into the fabric of *everyone's* experience.

Sexuality, within this use, was less about minoritising, less about drawing a particular catchment area, less about unquestioningly buying into the terms of homosexual or heterosexual. The word was used with an expanded function, where everyone's day-to-day relation with their world had to be taken into account. The idea of intersectionality—that *each of us* is made up of a variable cluster of social situations and desires—was used to revamp sexuality. The word was then used as much to challenge the category of the heterosexual, how painfully it is propped up, how it is kept in place in society by a range of controls.[11] The idea of sexuality here worked not simply as an answer to 'what is your sexuality', but as having something to do with everyone's sexual experience, as a rallying point for ensuring their day-to-day freedoms and choices.

Gautam, along with friend and co-editor Arvind, was to later include feminist scholar Nivedita Menon's pivotal essay 'How Natural is Normal? Feminism and Compulsory Heterosexuality' on the concept of *queerness* as a conceptual launching pad for their 2005 book *Because I Have a Voice*. Menon was a friend and political ally of many of the members of PRISM. Her essay inaugurated and set the tone for the section on 'Conceptual

[11] One of the most abiding legacies of the discipline of sexology and psychoanalysis is the category of the heterosexual. The main plot as an afterthought, as a necessity for letting the homosexual be the subplot, the variation. "[T]he period stretching roughly between Wilde and Proust," American writer Eve K. Sedgwick wrote, "[also the period of the sexologists and of Freud] was prodigally productive of attempts to name, explain, and define this new kind of creature, the homosexual person—a project so urgent that it spawned in its rage of distinction an even newer category, that of the heterosexual person" (Sedgwick 1990, pp. 82–83).

Approaches to Sexuality as a Form of Politics'. Politically inflected in such a way, the word-concept of sexuality could only operate through a form of doubleness, where it cited but also exceeded its classificatory, embodying function. The idea travelled promiscuously and contingently. In those "early days" (Bhan 2010, personal interview) of sexuality activism in Delhi, the dailiness of the usage of concept of 'sexuality', within these promiscuous deployments of various 'sexual-identities', mixed and matched the many histories and functions of the term. Sexuality, rather than simply being thought of as a condition, or as an indelible mark that could be taken up through identities based on it, was framed as a complex situation, something temporal, something flexible, an unfinished process. "[A]ll of us are," Menon could sign off her essay by noting, "or have the potential to be—'queer'", critical of social norms (2005, p. 39). With this, the idea of sexuality was appreciated with all its doubleness, as something which both contracts and expands, emblazons and dissolves. This is how the concept remained animated and pragmatic. This is how it worked politically. Travelling, varying, being capable of change.

As we noted earlier, sexuality activists and lawyers temporarily overstated the law only to amend it. Ironically, sexual identity was constantly used in a bid to make it effectively irrelevant in people's lives and pursuits, ideally for it to not matter. The activists used the sexual map but knew that simply its articulation was not the end. That it was not the site for closure, not the sum of all imaginations around same-sex desire, not the peg for all self-images. As noted in the epigraph to the chapter, Rani Sharma, grandmother of a young gay activist in Delhi, while sitting in the same media studio as the activists involved in the Supreme Court case on Section 377, including Gautam Bhan, takes the sexual map with a pinch of salt, ascribes to it a casual provisionality. She says that "all those in Japan got swept off in five minutes, now go there and find the gay in them, and the others in them,

go and find and tell me how many were gay and how many were others". In different hands and at different moments, sexuality's will to recognise, to typify people turns irrelevant. Its minoritising function gets confuted. Rani Sharma, born and raised in a Punjab village, came to Delhi in the late 1960s after her marriage. She is the grandmother of Sambhav Sharma, a young *gay* activist, and briefly a member of the queer collective Nigah in Delhi of which Bhan was an older founding member. Different deployments of the idea of sexuality, its conflicting senses, always exist near each other in such mixed sites. Playing with each other, offsetting and substituting each other. Sexuality affects people differently over time, through situations. The activist gesture does not and cannot ever sell sexuality as the end of the story. In fact, sexuality is only one form of story-telling about lives, meshing with other forms, with other ways of doing and speaking same-sex desire. Always, sexuality is a tactically used narrative ploy.

WHAT 'PERSONAL NARRATIVES' DO TO SEXUALITY

Asking the question "[d]o social struggles give rise to new forms of literature?" John Beverley tries to account for the preponderance of testimonial narratives within various social contexts in the late 20th century (1989, p. 11). These contexts exhaustively produce narratives which are "told in the first-person by a narrator who is also the real protagonist or a witness of the events he or she recounts, and whose unit of narration is usually a 'life' or a significant life experience" (Beverley 1989, pp. 12–13).

In a bid to historicise this genre, Beverley locates it within an "emergence of new forms of cultural and literary expression that embody, in more or less thematically explicit and formally articulated ways, the social forces contending for power in the world today" (ibid., p. 12). He has in mind "not only the struggle of working people everywhere against exploitation, but also in contingent ways movements of ethnic or national liberation,

the women's liberation movement, poor and oppressed peoples' organizations of all types, the gay rights movement, the peace movement, ecological activism, and the like" (ibid.).

One of the new forms of literature given rise by these movements, he states, is embodied by "the kind of narrative text that in Latin American Spanish has come to be called *testimonio*" (ibid.). Although Beverley is able to distinguish between forms such as 'autobiography' and 'testimonio', he also acknowledges an insistent overlap between these genres both of which rely on recounting and transcribing one's personal experience. For instance, he notes that the "forms of women's writing, and … U.S. black, Latino, and gay literature" (ibid., p. 23) may be characterised somewhere between an autobiography and testimonio as such. These are the sites where personal experiences, which are the constituents of any autobiography, are recounted and compiled within defined political frameworks of struggle for equality and rights, highlighting their role as political texts, whether for blacks, for women or for homosexuals.[12]

It should not be surprising that these forms coalesced as "a new narrative genre in the 1960s and further develop[ed] in close relation to the movements for national liberation and the generalized cultural radicalism of that decade" (Beverley 1989, p. 13). The 1960s and 1970s, as we have noted earlier, also mark

[12] The history of politically framed testimonial literature or life stories in India is routed through the usage of this genre in feminist and Dalit movements. Writing of its importance, Arnold and Blackburn insist that "[t]his [genre] is of particular value in seeking to understand and analyse groups that are socially marginalised and hence not normally heard, such as women and Dalits ('Untouchables'). As many of the titles in this type of scholarship attest, finding the 'voice' of the otherwise apparently voiceless has a force propelling the investigation of life histories as a whole, and not least in South Asia; in this way, the life-history approach is a means of breaking the silences imposed by society and history" (Arnold and Blackburn 2004, p. 6) The titular function of *Because I Have a Voice: Queer Politics in India* has to be located in this historical context of Indian feminist and Dalit movements which it learns from and cites.

the working of 'gay' and 'lesbian' identity politics in Europe and America that would criss-cross with the political idiom of similar movements around the world. That *the personal was political* was almost common-sensical as the reigning frame of these idioms. The personal narratives quoted within this framework would inevitably, and strategically, take recourse to the *homosexual subject* but also, crucially enough, disperse it.

This chapter focuses on personal narratives from two such activist publications in India that cite such narratives to outline those moments of recourse and dispersal. These include Narrain and Bhan's *Because I Have a Voice: Queer Politics in India* (2005), which I primarily focus on, Delhi-based AIDS Bhedbhav Virodhi Andolan's *Less than Gay: A Citizens' Report on the Status of Homosexuality in India* (1991). A brief reference is also made to Vidya Shah and Aditya Bondyopadhyay's *My Body is Not Mine: Stories of Violence and Tales of Hope: Voices from the Kothi Community in India* (2007). All the personal narratives cited in these books can be read in two ways: (a) as experiences of someone who inhabits a defined subject-position, gay or lesbian, as evidence of this subject-position, and (b) as experiences which are constitutive instances in the very making and unmaking of that subject-position, of its real time use and irrelevance, of the doubleness of sexuality as it plays out in identity politics (Scott 1991). The second reading, I will argue, leaves the first one far behind both in its precision and excitement.

In 2003, a 23-year-old Gautam Bhan and a group of friends started thinking about the volume of essays that he was to co-edit with his friend Arvind Narrain and publish in 2005 as *Because I Have a Voice: Queer Politics in India*. It was one of the "first big sexuality books" that dotted non-fiction publishing in India in the 2000s (personal interview, May 2011). Its young publisher at the small Yoda Press, Arpita Das, a friend of Gautam's, wanted the book to be "bold, clear and unapologetic" (ibid.). She was clear about the framing of the book as making a loud statement,

as doing the work of assertion and of claiming. This was evident when it finally came out.

On its back cover, the book promised to be a "groundbreaking collection", to give "voice to a concept, an identity and a politics that is only now," it said, "and slowly at that, beginning to enter the consciousness of the nation". However, behind this surface of clear, bold assertion was another elaborate story. That of the series of debates, hesitations and disagreements, a back and forth of articles between the editors and the contributors, their gradual transformation into published pieces, a crucial change in the working title of the book and the effort at getting the word on paper to match the political vision of the editors and the writers.

What the back cover asserted, the pages complicated. To what the frame shouts out, the content adds noise. The story of assertion is to be read against this background of how the volume was put together. One of the first exciting factors about the book, Gautam told me, was that it could be a third academic, a third activist and a third personal. In the final form this meant a section of academic analytic essays, a section of stories of queer activists on the ground and a section of personal narratives, of "personal journeys of queer lives". This already meant that no single analytic category could be sustained from one section to another. Instead, they were intermixed and qualified.

For the longest time, the working title of the book had been the title of one of its personal narratives submitted by a young psychology undergraduate from the University of Arizona, Vaibhav Saria's *I'm Out and Here's Why*. The publisher particularly liked this title. Gautam was sure, however, that this name was not to be. The final title shifted gears politically. It did not focus on *being out* as the primary way of doing sexuality politics. Retaining that strand in the conceit of 'voicing', the name change nevertheless displaces it from being a chief strategy of the South Asian queer movements. Where the stories sent by the activists appeared to be too neat or too linear, the editors sent them back

for revisions, for playing about with the ways the stories of activism around sexuality could be written. "We asked them," Gautam said, "to put back the lingering grudges, to put back the complexities, the fights and the disagreements" (personal interview). At that time, Gautam felt, activists "were not willing to air dirty laundry". "That has changed post-decriminalisation," he added, referring to the July 2009 Delhi High Court judgement. There was a year's worth of "solid editing" that went into shearing away the neatness and getting to the doubleness of sexuality, to the friction between how it is thought and how it is lived, to the frisson of the situations its throws up.

The book celebrated sexuality but always in this provisional manner. It celebrated it as a bit of strategising that does specific political and personal work for us. This provisionality is crucial to the daily life of sexuality, in banners or in books, in the lives of people it touches. In 2008, talking in the context of Delhi's first Queer Pride march, Gautam Bhan, five years older than when he first started thinking about the book, was to locate the apotheosis of sexual identity in its forgetting. "Sexuality," he said, "is ironically, being able to forget. To forget that one's being gay or lesbian or transgendered is just one part of one's identity, rather than everything that one is" (Bhan 2008) "In India today," he said, "you cannot forget. You cannot forget your caste if you are a Dalit, your gender if you are a woman, your religion if you are not Hindu or your sexuality if you are not heterosexual. The right to forget is a freedom" (ibid.). The sexual identity was seen as a temporary contract that we enter into, which we make sense of only in this temporariness, in this tacticality. Forgetting not simply as an act of idealised passing, being unremarkable while one *is* lesbian or gay, but as something more exciting, going beyond being lesbian or gay, by seeing this *being* itself as unstable, now mattering, now not mattering, now there, now absent. The idea of sexuality is played out in this game of remembrance and forgetting, a game that is played out *over historical and individual*

time. This is how sexuality pans out, how its doubleness is made evident. This is how it travels.

The substance of most of the life stories and personal narratives included within the publications I discuss is the substance of memory and experience. "One early winter afternoon I had come home with my friend..." (Parivaraj 1991, p. 9). There are repeated efforts of going back and pulling from the past the material that can be cited to make the immediate narrative possible in the present. There is a heady refusal to forget, as it were. "For as long as I remember, I was always referred to as chakka in school" (Saria 2005, p. 267). There is an incitement to recall and to retrospectively order a life that would lead up to and account for the present, which would style a life to make it immediately quotable. "Manish Mali liked to play with dolls and do household chores from a very early age. When he was five years old he began to realize that he was different from other boys" (Shah and Bondyopadhyay 2007, p. 42).

A specific kind of narrative is fashioned out of the abundant material of this past. There is an apparent limiting of possible tellings that could have taken place, selection of instances, choosing of themes, working with specific ideas. If you ask a particular question, all the material in front of you tends to get orchestrated only as a possible answer to that question. If you were to ask "[w]hat is so different or so special about queer life... [w]hat is its everyday nature composed of?" as Narrain and Bhan do, you will get tentative answers only to this question (2005, p. 25). Personal narratives are contextual responses to calls for narrating a particular kind of life. The genre of the personal narrative is a rhetorical action best suited to this situation, this kind of asking and telling. The narratives of lives are always informed by the circumstances which prompted their preparation in the first place.

In other words, editors have as much a role to play as writers. The motive behind the publication styles the published material.

Narrain and Bhan, in preparing *Because I Have a Voice*, circulated a call for contributions around April 2004 which stated that their attempt was "to put together writings on queer sexuality both from a conceptual viewpoint as well as from *more grounded experience based viewpoint*" to highlight "the everyday realities of queer lives" (Narrain, April 2009, personal email, emphasis mine). "We hope to have some sort of a documentation of the struggles as well as the personal reflections of *queer people*" (ibid., emphasis mine). It further states that "[w]e are particularly interested in looking at personal narratives...our *experiences as queer people* living in this country" (ibid., emphasis mine). In preparing the section "stories of struggle", Narrain and Bhan "asked [their]...writers—all of whom are activists in the queer movement—to write about their own *experiences*, looking at their lives as activists and *as queer people*" (2005, p. 20). Coinages like "queer life", "gay life", "queer existence" or "lesbian existence" are common within these publications and experiences recalled are treated as diverse data of these given *lives so defined* (Kale [1990], as quoted in ABVA 1991, p.9; Narrain and Bhan 2005, pp. 14, 26).

Joan W. Scott in her essay 'The Evidence of Experience' (1991) marks the collusion of this repeated invocation of the category of *experience* with an inability to question the grounds of how those subjects whose experiences are being told and retold are historically made possible in the first place. They treat their subject categories as eternal and outside history, as it were. Narrain and Bhan, however, are witting-unwitting practioners of doubleness. This is crucial to how we conceive the very moment of the assertion of sexual identity, to our ability to read it accurately. In many instances, the two editors use the categories casually, as a matter of fact, outside quotation marks, in order to mark people. But in other instances they also supply the histories of these terms, what made them historically persuasive, what are the rhetorical uses and harms of such use, what makes them frustrating and exciting at times. Their text jumps unpredictably

between these two tracks. The book works out the doubleness of sexuality as it pans out in identity politics. "We never had a pretension," Gautam told me, "it was never a truth telling book, we were trying to summarise all the differences of opinion, all the separate strands that we saw" (personal interview). "Let's put this together, let's capture the moment we said," in preparing the book, and the "moment itself was of all sorts" (ibid.).

Narrain and Bhan rely heavily on the category of experience in order to conceptualise *queer lives*. "When the evidence offered is the evidence of 'experience,' the claim for referentiality is further buttressed—what could be truer, after all, than a subject's own account of what he or she has lived through? It is precisely this kind of appeal to experience as uncontestable evidence and as an originary point of explanation—as a foundation on which analysis is based—that weakens the critical thrust of histories of difference" (Scott 1991, p. 777). Lesbian and gay political movements, Scott argued, "take as self-evident the identities of those whose experience is being documented and thus naturalize their difference. They locate resistance outside its discursive construction and reify agency as an inherent attribute of individuals, thus decontextualizing it" (ibid.). I want to argue that the watershed moments of identity politics, such as the publication of a book like *Because*, have to be read through the framework of doubleness, whereby it will be seen that such moments do not deploy sexuality or sexual identity in any single, consistent way. That they cannot be read simply as contributing to a uniform naturalisation of 'difference' but instead as more unstable moments where this difference through sexuality is deployed but also put into crisis. The self-evidence of sexuality, and of identities derived from it, is never smoothly sustained in these moments, instead it is streaked with uncertainties and adjustments.

Earlier, we saw how the *homosexual subject* came to be imagined at certain points in history. The activist agenda

strategically remembers and omits this history. Narrain and Bhan both raise on a pedestal and demystify the homosexual. The "groundbreaking" assertion that they were trying to make with the book sent the sexual map of gay and straight rushing forth into the public sphere.[13] However, the contradictions of this sexual map also travelled publicly, its difficulties, the moments when it comes apart, when it overwhelms its uses by its nuisances.[14] Narrain and Bhan wrote that the "[k]ey to this

[13] The book was reviewed almost immediately in mainstream Indian dailies like the *Hindustan Times*, *The Times of India* and *The Indian Express* and several other smaller publications. "In publishing," Gautam said, "it had made a splash, it was one of the first queer books to do that" (personal interview).

[14] The sexological/psychoanalytic history of the homosexual identity continues to insist itself in the very mode people imagine, talk of and write about homosexual identity within contemporary activism. Giving the example of the lesbian and gay support group meetings in Bangalore, Vinay Chandran and Arvind Narrain write that "[t]he issues raised and discussed in a support group are the same ones that are raised with psychiatrists, clinical psychologists and counselors. Issues of *self-identity*, marriage pressures, *coming out* to friends and family are spoken of regularly in these meetings" (Chandran and Narrain 2005, pp. 67–68, emphasis mine). Chandran and Narrain claim that LGBT movements pose an "epistemological challenge" to the psychiatric characterisation of homosexuality as a distinct disease and as a specific object of knowledge from an assumed heterosexist position. Even as that challenge is mounted, it is also evident that the LGBT movements, epistemically speaking, also build upon the sexuality-as-self's-inner-truth perspective, which was the cornerstone of psychoanalysis, as much as they try to transform its assumptions and values. The Freudian psychoanalytic sessions, like the counselling sessions in today's Bangalore, treated the past life experiences of its patients as data that would explain the state. The drive of the telling of personal experiences during psychoanalytic sessions was structured as etiological, in order to account where it all started and how. The drive of the genre of commissioned personal narratives, as we notice in this chapter, is not remarkably different. Homosexuality, if now not a disease, is still distinct, locked in a contract of difference from heterosexuality, as an object of repetitious narration and elaboration. Sexuality activism both overplays and underplays this distinction depending on the situation at hand.

act of political resistance is the formation of identities that arise out of understanding of one's sexuality" (2005, p. 13). Sexuality functioning as a foundational concept, as an "understanding", as a deeply emotive turn in people's lives, as a "shared sense" (ibid.). "[A] sexually defined group," Narrain's favorite queer theorist had written, "is itself a mode of sociability" (Warner 1993, p. xxiv). For Narrain and Bhan, sexuality becomes this sort of a ground, both questioned and unquestionable. Sexuality both as the etiological cause of sexual experience, one's inner property, but also as something possible, something useful only after experiences of discriminations, as temporarily important to stage a struggle, to fight by taking over terms.

The call to narrate does not simply refer to the potential narrative but also configures it in advance. Narrain and Bhan tend to further provide the crucial narrative points for such an imagining of gay or lesbian life, framing them as generalisable: "Perhaps emblematic of the struggles of queer people around the world is the act of 'coming out'—the first voicing of our desires to ourselves and then to others—which has a central place in defining queer identity" (2005, p. 24). These narrative points could progressively crystallise and pose as necessities for any narrative to be recognised as gay or lesbian. The motivation to include narratives in publications such as Narrain and Bhan's is that they are unique yet generalisable. The tendency is to encompass everyone, to cue all with a few: "*We have all* come out to a friend," the editors write, "and realized that they know next to nothing about same-sex desire. *We have all* ached to tell our parents…" (ibid, p. 11, emphasis mine). The drive towards generalisability marks their inclusion as politically *exemplary* texts.

The Italian political philosopher Giorgio Agamben talks of the use of examples. "In any context," he says, "where it exerts its force, the example is characterized by the fact that it holds for all cases of the same type, and, at the same time, it is included among these" (2003, Section III). The example

is "one singularity among others, which, however, stands for each of them and serves for all. On the one hand, every example is treated in effect as a real particular case but on the other, it remains understood that it cannot serve in its particularity' (ibid.). Narrain and Bhan are caught in a bit of a quandary, one which you always confront in the game of offering examples. They want their personal narratives to be representative but not dictative, suggestive but not prescriptive. "These [personal] narratives," they say, "are perhaps the most telling reminder that there is no one queer reality and that there is not just one, but indeed many, queer struggles" (2005, p. 20). They want a sort of functional coherence that is required both theoretically and practically for constituting an identity and any politics based on it. They try and work this by a limited set of recognisable narrative cues, such as coming out, community, pride, resistance, gay life, lesbian identity, etc., but also never fail to remind their readers that each of these cues will work in a different way for dissimilar people, times and contexts. That for some, these cues would not even be relevant. In that sense, the idea of 'sexuality' even in this moment of watershed assertion, remains open-ended, and attests to the effective doubleness between its theories and its many praxes.

"Genre[s]," Francesca Orsini notes, have a "peculiar tendency: to lead the reader into thinking that its own partial view is in fact the whole" (2006a, p. 3). "Each genre codifies a particular correspondence," she writes, "between signifiers and signified, and thus establishes its own language, its own rhetoric" (ibid.). "But while each genre carves up the world and limits the universe of discourse according to its partial intention, it presents itself to the reader as a whole" (ibid.). This is both the lure and the danger of queer life as genre, the risk of such a book as *Because I Have a Voice*. This is also why Narrain and Bhan never feel they have reached quite something like the genre of 'queer life' in their book. Instead "queer lives", became not a genre but a kind of "living theory" that has "much to teach...about news

ways of relating, of expressing desire and relating to notions of our identities and our selves, and ultimately new notions of personhood" (2005, p. 13).

It seems that there was a distinct effort on the part of the young editors to not let their casual usage of the terms such as gay or lesbian solidify into an eternal type or species. Pushing forth his early passionate training in intersectionality, Bhan was given to see and work with differences in class, gender and caste as having an undeniable effect on the many social lives of sexuality. The idea of sexuality remained no longer effectively an unchanging inner thing but a constantly moving, altering factor, now overplayed, now not. It did not freeze into a genre, which is etymologically allied with *genus*, Greek for race or kind.[15] Sexuality, as it was worked out in Narrain and Bhan's selection of narratives, was not meant to constitute a genre, not meant to flower into a distinct form, or work as a prescriptive model for a good queer life.

The doubleness of their project, its efforts and confusions, was reflected in these narratives. Narrain and Bhan, despite being surprised as to how much of the book came as a response to the email call, also had to chase several friends to contribute to the book. One such friend was Ali Potia who had grown up in Bombay, who had participated in an early Nigah open mic in Delhi, and who at the time of writing for the book worked as a corporate trainer in Colombo. His story 'Islam and Me' (2005) tells us how personal narratives work, how their text makes and unmakes sexual identity, how it cites its psychoanalytic history only to exceed it, how it tackles the demand for simultaneous uniqueness and generalisability of their stories. In his piece, even as Ali proudly claims his "gay" identity, he disenchants its

[15] Genre always informs the content which it apparently only allocates. Like Greek *tupos*, source of 'type', which means a 'blow, impression', the sense is of striking. Forms and kinds emerge from the impressions made by such a striking.

adoption, denaturalises the category, giving us a heady scene of the doubleness of sexuality.[16]

Freud's homosexual was a result of a story, of a particular format of telling lives. Of a space clearing gesture for an 'inner' sphere and then imagining a tale of conflict and resolutions within this sphere. In asking Potia for a piece for their book, the editors had made a non-incidental suggestion of the format. "As I started thinking what this piece would be about," Potia begins, "I was reminded of the word 'journey'. He had said to me, 'you could just reflect on your own journey in negotiating your faith and sexuality" (2005, p. 252). The editors were doing something very common. The format of the journey triggered the expectation of looking back on the roads travelled and commenting on them. This was squarely in the legacy of the Freudian call to look back, to retrospectively arrange a narrative by selecting episodes, prioritising them, making a sequence. Louis Althusser calls this "pre-appointment", our particular ways of expecting things, our ways of expecting particular narrations for explaining those things.[17] The idea is that once the format has been suggested, the

[16] akshay khanna frames similar issues as slippages between *subjection* and *subjectivation* where subjection may imply "a 'calling upon' to understand one's experiences in certain terms" (2007, p. 178), the editorial gesture par excellence, and subjectivation implies that "there may be, equally, other ways in which to understand oneself and, indeed, a drive *not* to make sense of particular experiences" (ibid., emphasis in the original). "How we make sense of an experience or participate in it may be different from the way we are 'called upon' to" (ibid.). khanna, of course, elaborates on how these slippages work in his thesis (see khanna 2010).

[17] "Freud shows," Althusser's full comment reads, "that individuals are always 'abstract' with respect to the subjects they always-already are, simply by noting the ideological ritual that surrounds the expectation of a 'birth', that 'happy event'. Everyone knows how much and in what way an unborn child is expected. Which amounts to saying, very prosaically, if we agree to drop the 'sentiments', i.e., the forms of family ideology (paternal/maternal conjugal/fraternal) in which the unborn child is expected: it is certain in advance that

material gravitates around it, tries to make sense by it, resists it. "Little does he know," Ali wrote, however, of one the editors, "that it's hardly been one at all. I guess my journey with regard to my faith and sexuality has only been equivalent to me picking my mode of transport and strapping myself in. It's far too early for me to look back on the road I've travelled and comment on it, but I will try" (2005, p. 252). Once the format takes over, the narrator seals the pact with the editorial expectation and begins on the journey. The call precipitates this kind of narrative, a reflection on something that till now lay fallow, a journey of something that till now was not written out in this way. Even as Potia seals this pact, he acknowledges right at that moment, a sort of mismatch between the editorial call and his own story—little does he know—a mismatch that he works with, works around and works against.

"I have struggled with the question of identity," Potia writes, "for a few months" (2005, p. 253). He poses this question, predictably enough, to his "inner voice", using a widely available vocabulary of self-reflection, the general rhetorical setting of personal story telling, especially after Freud. For him, the piece becomes a trigger point, a "cathartic attempt" to work out the question of whether he really identifies himself as a "gay Muslim".

it will bear its Father's Name, and will therefore have an identity and be irreplaceable. Before its birth, the child is therefore always-already a subject, appointed as a subject in and by the specific familial ideological configuration in which it is 'expected' once it has been conceived. I hardly need add that this familial ideological configuration is, in its uniqueness, highly structured, and that it is in this implacable and more or less 'pathological' (presupposing that any meaning can be assigned to that term) structure that the former subject to-be will have to 'find' 'its' place, i.e., 'become' the sexual subject (boy or girl) which it already is in advance. It is clear that this ideological constraint and *pre-appointment*, and all the rituals of rearing and then education in the family, have some relationship with what Freud studied in the forms of the pre-genital and genital 'stages' of sexuality, i.e., in the 'grip' of what Freud registered by its effects as being the unconscious" (1971, emphasis mine).

Citing quotations from the Quran and the Hadiths of Prophet Mohammed as his epigraphs, Potia observes that "the Islamic religious tradition leaves very little room for the interpretation of homosexuality as legitimate within the orthodoxy of the faith". "[L]iberal Islam," he notes, "simply advocates the lesser of two evils—social ostracism instead of death". Faced with such "overt hostility", he renounces the project of finding "legitimacy within the faith". He drops "the word 'Muslim' from…[his] list of identities precisely because," as he says, "if I subscribe to an identity, I would like to embrace it completely. I can't be a proper and correct Muslim the way the term is defined, and also be a homosexual without exposing double standards in my beliefs" (ibid., p. 254). "The two terms, Queer and Muslim," he seems to have concluded, "are mutually exclusive right now" (ibid.).

Potia seems to have done the job. Worked out a relation between his faith and his sexuality. If he cannot be a "proper and correct Muslim", he will be none at all. If he will embrace any identity, he will "embrace it completely". "[W]e are willing to stand outside the courtyard [of the Mosque]," he writes, "with our rainbow flags and Cher CDs telling everybody our message. We will enter only when you also let in that big contingent of unveiled, single women and don't make us put the rainbow flags away or mute the Cher" (Potia 2005, p. 257). Till then, Potia seems to suggest, we stand apart. When the editors tried to introduce Potia's piece, they noted that his "effort at reconciling the different parts of his identity brings him up against a blank wall" (Narrain and Bhan 2005, p. 26).

If we read only the moments of declaration in Potia's piece, the moments where he sounds confident and decisive, we would have to wrap up our analysis right about here. However, sexuality is a lived thing that is marked by doubleness between its declarations and practices. It does not simply reside in these neat moments of its declaration as identity, in the events of its utterance. Instead, it is realised in its dailiness where it is

overemphasised and underplayed, worn and abandoned. Even as he claims to embrace or dispose of identities *completely*, Potia offers evidence only to the contrary. Even as he establishes homosexuality as an involuntary "orientation" ratified by his "inner voice", he offers other entry points to the idea of sexuality, other ways of conceptualising it. In sum, his narrative proves that even the moment of proud assertion is only one part of the story of the doubleness of sexuality. In its everydayness, sexuality is always already a partial, unfinal thing. That there is no complete embrace, that there is no proper and correct way of being gay or Muslim.

Despite having claimed the watertightness of his "Muslim" and "gay" identities, their mutual exclusiveness, Potia offers situational meeting points where he merges them for a tactical purpose. Here, he offers a version of the everyday which does not stand the test of his declarations, which bends those utterances, qualifies them repeatedly. "Apparently," he notes, "there is a certain, how do you say, *je ne sais quoi* about being Muslim and gay in some quarters of Indian queer society. Most everyone, except hardened RSS types, find Pakistani, Kashimiri and Afghan men hot" (Potia 2005, p. 255). "That works in my favour," Potia notes with particular relish, "but it's a precise masquerade—no different than someone being 'masculine' or describing himself as 'gym-fit' on his online profile" (ibid.). Identity is this temporal game of playing up and playing down different aspects at different times, of entering and exiting contracts—sometimes seamlessly, sometimes abruptly—depending on situations. It is a constant working out. After mentioning the rainbow flags, the Cher CDs, the Oscar Wilde books, the Streisand concert tickets, and the campiest reference in all of Hollywood, Judy Garland's Dorothy, he writes, "Yes, I'm playing up the stereotypes" (ibid., p. 258). If Potia's narrative offers any place, it is that shifting place of play, it is that knack that he is participating in an elaborate game. "So what is identity after all," Potia risks the question and responds in

the next line, "I'm not even going to attempt to go there" (ibid., p. 257). Constantly deferring the going there, he withholds the complete embrace which he had offered earlier.

Even in terms of the history of ideas, Potia latches on to more than one meaning of the word-concept of sexuality. He offsets one connotation with another. At one point, he distinctly pegs on to the universalisable scope of sexuality, seeing it as something basic and internal to everyone, in the sense that everyone must have this thing called sexual orientation. "[T]here are thousands of people in India whose orientation may be gay, but whose preference is not" (ibid., p. 253). Where Potia saw his Muslimness overtly as a burden of 'culture', his gayness was somehow outside culture, sexuality was something implicit in him, in everyone. He believes in a "rational discourse about sexuality and faith" and sexuality—gay or straight—was seen as built into the make-up of every individual, implied in their inner voice (ibid., p. 255). It seems that Potia was "driven to translate diverse sexual behaviours, desires and politics into language that finds its base in the idea of sexuality as personhood" (khanna 2005, p. 93). At another point in the same piece however, he lets go of this idea and instead situates sexuality in the larger sense of *sexualness* of people, in how they physically radiate desires and affects. He locates sexuality not as an abstract inner thing, but instead as a bodily experience, triggered by, as he writes, his "body's physical message" that "tells...[him] that he is attracted to men" (Potia 2005, p. 254). In this "physical message", sexuality exceeds its Freudian story of mental growth and inner development, of something having misfired in the mind and resulted in a separate species of sorts. Instead, it is located in the real time pushes and pulls of the body, of the many and uncentred ways in which our bodies make us gravitate towards something or someone. These pushes and pulls, as such, cannot be taxonomised into being of one kind or another. The sexual map of gay and straight is only one of the many ways of reading these pushes and pulls.

In the immediate aftermath of the Delhi High Court judgement in July 2009, when the North Indian Hindu godman Baba Ramdev claimed that he could treat 'homosexuality' with yogic practices of *dhyan*, concentration and *pranayam*, breathing exercises and control, he was conflating precisely these two ways of looking at sexual experience, these two long-drawn histories of ideas (Jain 2009). He was referring to homosexuality, a separate, cognisable thing in medical and psychiatric science, in law and in public politics. Yet, he was also latching on to a more generalisable frame of the indiscriminate sexual desires of the body, of its inopportune excesses, of its intemperate corruptions, one that was widely available in the Pandey Beechan Sharma 'Ugra' oeuvre. These excesses, Ramdev believed, could be checked by reining the body in, of setting it within the bodily disciplines and repetitious routines of yoga. Potia, like Ramdev, invokes more than one entry point to sexuality. He confuses and transforms the word-concept in this process, adds to its possible meanings, keeps its functions animated.

Towards the end of his piece, Potia's usages again play with the many logics of the concept of sexuality. He begins the climactic paragraph by suggesting that sexuality works in terms of being gay or being straight. "I see no problems," he writes confidently, "in defining my identity exclusively in terms of my sexuality. After all, being gay is about so much more than just sex" (Potia 2005, p. 258).

It is very exciting, however, to note where he places *sexuality*, how he conceptualises *being gay*, what he thinks composes this fact of being gay, what it is effectively made up of. "My queer, urban family and I," he writes, "have much more in common with each other than just the fact that we sleep with members of the same sex. We face the same discriminations, we fight the same battles, and we share the same spaces" (ibid.). Sexual identity connoting not so much the sameness of who we are but instead the sameness of what we share. No longer simply an

autobiographical conceit, it draws attention to social attitudes. It works out the collectivity not in terms of a bodily profiling of species, pace the sexologists, or a mental profiling of a kind of people, pace the Freudian psychoanalysts. Instead it finds collectivity in the political questions we share, in the problems we collectively face, in the spaces we ache to create.

Once collectivity is defined this way, it immediately humbles itself. It cannot be extended to an abstract everyone, to some sort of community extending beyond these overt points of commonality. It makes clear that sameness is not a given, is not simply present inside each individual. If the questions that people face on a day-to-day basis change, if social spaces alter, if political economies change, then the community already stands interrupted. It is not a natural, self-evident bond, and it is certainly not self-generating and ever present. For Potia, it is his unapologetic "queer, urban family", English speaking, middle or upper class, students or working professionals. He does not pretend to speak on behalf of anyone else. His version of a coming together is more political, more provisional. The umbrella of a community will be provisionally shared only if the problems remain the same. If the problems change, if self-descriptions vary or if the political viewpoints alter, another kind of community will have to be thought up. Being gay would not suffice.

In Narrain and Bhan's book, the personal narratives offer up contesting versions of the concept of sexuality. In the same narrative, more than one strand of it is picked up, persevered with and played with. Authors simultaneously follow and distance themselves from the frameworks of their telling. The very act of narrativisation works through the many lives of a concept. Elsewhere in the book, Pawan Dhall in 'Solitary Cruiser' foregrounds this implicit tendency. He writes that "it is useful and healing at times to distance oneself from the politics of the

queer scene and look at it and myself more objectively" (2005, p. 121). He writes of sexual identity as always being in a process of change. Of the inability of sexual identity to capture *all* sexual experience. Talking of friends, activists, lovers, parents and cousins, he writes that "[a]ll these people and many more have and still are shaping my politics as a sexual being and as a human being...Their actions encourage me to look at myself in new ways, even if for a hearty laugh. For instance, I am beginning to consider identifying as 'a gay man who is straight, curious, and sometimes thrilled with frills'" (ibid., p. 122).

The personal narrative, as the genre most inextricably tied to the self, only presents it as an uneven and unpredictable process. Responding to an editorial call, putting together the stories of the self, the episodes of one's life and the feelings one has felt, the contributor ends up producing a text with diverse motivations and conceptual directions. Read thoroughly, read with and beyond its declarative moments, the text of the personal narratives ends up reflecting not a simple reign of one meaning of sexuality, but instead its many uses, its many suggestions, its many contexts. They are not so much the stories of readymade people and identities, they are in fact the stories of the making and unmaking of these identites and people, of their real time uncertainties and provisionalities. Read thus, the narratives which seductively offer a subject-position also withhold it, keep it churning, in effect keeping it politically animated. They reference but only inventively. They are sincere but also parodically self-conscious. They play with the idea of essence and also simultaneously disenchant it. They play out the doubleness of sexuality, in the deepest sense of the term, constantly attesting the friction between its conceptualisation and its actual experiences. Between the hailing and the responses, they seem to suggest, lies a shadow.

ON THE INCONSISTENT TEXT

> ...the sexual minorities support group. One of the rituals in this new form of collectivisation is the round of introductions. At a support group meeting one announces one's name, and one's "sexuality". Two observations I make with respect to this ritual—one, that many clearly state that "before coming to this support group I did not 'know' that I was a kothi or a bisexual". The support group is about the naming of oneself, recognizing oneself within certain terms, "identifying" oneself...often one finds that in one support group meeting a person identifies with one category. Two weeks later the person has changed to another category, only to perhaps revert to the first in another few weeks. This often evokes laughter in the group, as though identification were a joke (khanna 2005, p. 101).

In the genre of personal narratives, in the life stories, sexual identity works as a name. Like any name, it does not appear throughout the narrative. It cannot be stretched out. It punctuates the text at specific points in ways that can only be described as tactical. The personal narratives are the fields of this tactical play.

Sometimes it is used to refer directly to oneself. "I am Indian and *gay*" (Saria 2005, p. 267, emphasis mine). Sometimes it points out the social worlds and contexts of the narrator. "He kept his *gay* and *straight* worlds totally separate" (Pattanaik 2005, p. 246, emphasis mine). Or "[f]or most of us, our *gay* and *straight* lives are laid out like a chess board" (Sandip 1991, p. 12, emphasis mine). Sometimes it works as a way to index people to recall them later, much like using their proper names. "At the end of the conversation, Mrs. B. took out her address book to show scores of addresses of *gay* people in Delhi—friends of her son. They were all listed under '*G*', for *Gay*" (ABVA 1991, p. 13, emphasis mine).

Sometimes it is an abuse. "How many of us have heard men call a woman who is competent, 'tough', not available, 'a bloody *lesbian*' as a way of dismissing her?" (R.A. 1991, p. 13, emphasis mine). Sometimes it is an obscure sign, either more or less absent

or relatively unknown or as something which was unknown in the past. "*Lihaf* does not contain any such words. In those days, the word '*lesbianism*' was not in use. I did not know exactly what it was. The story is a child's description of something which she cannot fully understand. It was based on my own experience as a child" (Chughtai quoted in ABVA 1991, p. 27, emphasis mine).[18] Sometimes it works as a shorthand, a strategy to avoid

[18] Ismat Chughtai's short story '*Lihaf*' was published in 1941. The narrator's voice is of a young girl. She writes about the few days she spent in her aunt's house. The relationship of her aunt and the house maid, Rabbu, presents itself to the young girl in several ways, not all of which she can put in words. The story was banned by the then colonial state government on charges of obscenity. Ismat Chughtai fought the charges in the Lahore High Court and finally won the lawsuit. In the deepest sense, her victory was based on the many lives and motivations within single word-concepts, how they behave variedly depending on the ways they get looked at. In her autobiography Chughtai recalls the day in the Lahore High Court, remembers how the case crumbled: "There was a big crowd in the court. Several people had advised us to offer our apologies to the judge, even offering to pay the fines on our behalf. The proceedings had lost some of their verve, the witnesses who were called in to prove that '*Lihaf*' was obscene were beginning to lose their nerve in the face of our lawyer's cross-examination. No word capable of inviting condemnation could be found. After a great deal of searching a gentleman said, 'The sentence "she was collecting 'ashiqs'" (lovers) is obscene.' / 'Which word is obscene?' the lawyer asked. '"Collecting", or "ashiqs"?' / 'The word "ashiqs",' the witness replied, somewhat hesitantly. / 'My Lord, the word "ashiqs" has been used by the greatest poets and has also been used in na'ts. This word has been given a sacred place by the devout.' / 'But it is highly improper for girls to collect "ashiqs",' the witness proclaimed. / 'Why?' / 'Because … because … this is improper for respectable girls.' / 'But not improper for girls who are not respectable?' / 'Uh … uh … no.' / 'My client has mentioned girls who are perhaps not respectable. And as you say, sir, non-respectable girls may collect "ashiqs".' / 'Yes. It's not obscene to mention them, but for an educated woman from a respectable family to write about these girls merits condemnation!' / The witness thundered. / 'So go right ahead and condemn as much as you like, but does it merit legal action?' / The case crumbled" (tr. Tahira Naqvi and Muhammad Umar Memon, quoted in Khan 2010).

stress, to evade boring repetitions. "Now, if my cousins decided to 'drop in' what would I do about my multi-coloured postcard, which had just one word printed on it in large font: 'homo'? So how does one go about this: shall I simply put up the postcard on my door so everyone knows and I am spared the ordeal of repeating the same banal detail to each one?" (Tejani 2005, p. 272). The name itself becomes banal. Sometimes it is a hope to bring together people under an umbrella, as a name that can be shared, as a relationship that can be initiated with others who are felt to be in similar situations, who feel like they are going through the same feelings, the same experiences. The list is long.

There is no denotative consistency in the way *lesbian* or *gay* is used. The terms are repeatedly denied the consistency of a referral to the self, are interrupted as ontological categories. Instead, they are realised in their many kinds of employments. They appear in varied fields of temporality and usage. For instance, in the phrase lesbian sex, the main object of description is not the person but her sexual actions, the field of her desires. Here, the word suits itself to this particular usage. At other times the words are used mainly to suggest participation in a certain gay or lesbian community, in a certain gay or lesbian fashion or look or lifestyle. There, the categories exceed the person and become the names for a trend, for an entire visual culture or an urban mis-en-scene, one with which the person herself has an oblique, changing relationship. Personal narratives constitute this varying relationship of the vocabulary of sexuality with the narratorial voice. The concepts are mediated through a usage that is perhaps akin to the tactical way in which we deploy names.

Desire for the same sex has had a disorderly relationship with the practice of names. The teasing frequency of that phrase—"[t]he love that dare not speak its name"—from the Irish writer Oscar Wilde's young lover Alfred 'Bosie' Douglas's 1894 poem, *Two Loves*, in many subsequent academic essay titles, pop journalism and poetic references to same-sex desire should not

be entirely surprising.[19] The name and the love that cannot be named are always mutually implicated. The name distinguishes it, obscures it, minoritises it and plays with it. The professed inability to name, as against an indifference to it, has effectively the same conceit as naming. It is the other side of the same coin. The name does not simply refer to something, it makes it referrable in particular ways. The deployment of names, however, this game of referring itself, is always uneven and impartial in narrative time and space.

The French social scientist Michel de Certeau has elaborated on this tactical nature of the deployment of names, on the necessary inability of names to fully determine the entities and people they describe. His history of names is the history of their use, of their real time lives. He talks of the names of the urban streets in late 20th century Paris and the ways in which they are variously used by Parisians. The name is put to many jobs and refers to different things at different times. It is here that urban time and space and narrative time and space yield a very useful analogy.

"What is it that they spell out?" de Certeau asks of street names, "[d]isposed in constellations that hierarchize and semantically order the surface of the city, operating chronological

[19] The last few lines of the now popular poem, as printed in *The Chameleon* in 1894 in England are:

"...Sweet youth,
Tell me why, sad and sighing, thou dost rove
These pleasant realms? I pray thee speak me sooth
What is thy name?' He said, 'My name is Love.'
Then straight the first did turn himself to me
And cried, 'He lieth, for his name is Shame,
But I am Love, and I was wont to be
Alone in this fair garden, till he came
Unasked by night; I am true Love, I fill
The hearts of boy and girl with mutual flame.'
Then sighing, said the other, 'Have thy will,
I am the love that dare not speak its name.'"

arrangements and historical justifications, these words (*Borrego, Botzaris, Bougainville…*) slowly lose, like worn coins, the value engraved on them, but their ability to signify outlives its first definition. *Saints-Peres, Corentin Celton, Red Square*…these names make themselves available to the diverse meanings given them by passers-by" (1984, p. 104). The names, and what they precisely connote, have a habit of fluctuating. They "detach themselves from the places they were supposed to define and serve as imaginary meeting points on itineraries which, as metaphors, they determine for reasons that are foreign to their original value but may be recognized or not by passers-by" (ibid.).

In the real time of usage, names wear out. Usage does not simply strengthen them, repetition does not simply boost their hold, it humbles them, twists them, relativises them. Usage can do unpredictable things to names. Gay and lesbian work in a temporal arrangement of a narrative in which they do not stretch evenly. They are picked up and dropped as self-definitions, qualified without much notice. "Two weeks later the person has changed to another category, only to perhaps revert to the first in another few weeks. This often evokes laughter in the [support] group, as though identification were a joke" (khanna 2005).

The joke is not specific to some narratives. The inconsistency, that is the premise of this joke, is generalisable and of several sorts. Even those narratives which claim identification as gay or lesbian with pride, which are invested in these terms, carry on a tactical game of names. Sometimes it is sexuality as one's truth, as a whelming name. *I am lesbian.* At other times, it is not so much the name that takes centrestage, but the general feeling of sameness that it instigates with others. The name once deployed fades, becomes banal. Once you do the formality of filling up the dating website form, once you plug in the word gay or lesbian at the beginning, then you go on to find plenty of people who are in the same situation as you, pursuing one another, flirting, sharing stories, comparing notes, sexing it up.

At other times, this name is left behind for other criteria of difference, such as how one carries oneself in public, how bodies pass, how one tricks names, makes them inapplicable, slips over them and what types they might imply. "I am very *different* from all these people and don't like attracting attention through flashy clothes" (John 1991, p. 8, emphasis mine). At other times, the name is confounded in a far more intricate game of hiding and seeking, of a zoning of secrecy and sharing. Here, this zoning, this game holds sway and determines situations of same-sex desiring people, rather than the will to name or its absence. "Because we must seek our orgasms in darkness, *secretly*, too often our sexual life never extends beyond our zippers" (Sandip 1991, p. 12).

Still at other points in the personal narratives, same-sex desire gets understood within the frames of sentiment and feelings that do not refer back these affects to an apparent inner causant, such as one's sexuality or sexual orientation. Where the will *read them in* is absent, where desire is experienced without always attributing it to a specific fountainhead. "I have often felt an attraction towards boys," the 22-year-old Chandrkant in Shahdara, Delhi told ABVA members in the early 1990s, "and have even experienced some sexual relations with them. But I don't think of myself as a homosexual. Actually, I don't agree with what the word means. Tell me, if I have an intense, psychic friendship with a girl, would I be called a heterosexual" (quoted in ABVA 1991, p. 11). "If you mean by the word homosexual," he continues, "a certain sensibility (*bhaav*), then I would agree, I am one. I have many intense, intimate friendships with boys. I like being with them, touching them, sleeping next to them. But perhaps I still have a hang-up about accepting myself as gay in sexual sense." Chandrakant's unease with specific words is not mere linguistic quibbling. It is the disparity of conceptual logics, the tentative separability of idioms. He accepts the term, takes the name, but only on his own terms, with a different, personalised "sense".

Each of these instances are dissimilar. Naming, feelings of difference, intimations of sameness, practices of habit, games of secrecy and sharing, experience of desire as such—each of these are different modes of representation, they make for different situations. They realise same-sex desire in disparate ways. They occur through different narratives and, more crucially, within the same ones. They cannot simply be overlapped with each other. Each posits a unique relation of the desire with the self who feels it, relations of truth, relations of irrelevance, relations of jocularity. "In the cracks and cleavages in the spaces of this city," Sheba Tejani talks of Bombay, "my girlfriend and I had found the freedom to be bold, to be indifferent and absorbed. We had actually come to believe that *we were not extraordinary*, even as we existed on the margins of the heterosexual rule book. We held hands on Marine Drive, we kissed in the elevator and we laughed at prejudice" (Tejani 2005, p. 273, emphasis mine). Simultaneously overplayed and irrelevant, simultaneously on the margin and in the thick of it all, the text does not zone in on one thing or one function of sexuality. The text of the personal narrative forfeits the classificatory sexual map as much as it adopts it, redraws it, interrupts and smudges it. The text becomes an unstable host to the various ways in which same-sex desire is moulded, is rendered into reference. It is a patchwork of these many ways, always doubling, always dynamic.

The word 'lesbian' or 'gay' is a sign. This sign functions in ways which are not uniform but tactical. Even within a single narrative, this sign modifies as it goes. It has no ultimate access to the narrating self. Its appearances in the narrative are disrupted by time and space—it is neither everywhere nor always. Often, it is interrupted and overtaken by more general repertoires of intimacy or affect, where its classificatory drive is muzzled. In his poem *Death and Fame*, Allen Ginsberg distills this point of overtake into a line: "*I forgot whether I was straight gay queer or funny*, was myself, tender and affectionate to be kissed on the top

of my head" (Ginsberg 1997, emphasis mine). The apotheosis of identity as its own forgetting, as its own irrelevance. The entire sprawl of the personal narrative, like the city map in the heads of de Certeau's urbanites, is uneven, it does not follow through any one sense of the word, it picks and drops terms, it digresses without notice. "Linking acts and footsteps [of urban dwellers], opening meanings and directions, these words operate in the name of an emptying-out and wearying-away of their primary role. They become liberated spaces that can be occupied" (1984, p. 105). They are marked by a "rich indetermination" which "gives them, by means of a semantic rarefaction, the function of articulating a second, poetic geography on top of the geography of the literal, forbidden or permitted meaning' (de Certeau 1984, p. 105). The concept of homosexuality as a separate thing, of the homosexual as a separate person, is offset by this poetic geography of personal narrative.

Words become clues, interpreted diversely, situationally, in each of their synchronic appearances. No one model, let alone of the homosexual, is ever fully realised in any given personal narrative. No given text of the personal narrative allows an even emphasis on any singular model of understanding same-sex desire. This section has argued for an intratextual multiplicity within personal narratives, where one use of name is not isomorphous with another. It makes a case for close attentive readings of personal narratives. They are textual crucibles for mixing, for working out, for getting further bewildered with names. "Language," for Adam, who was made in the image of his arrogant God, was "determined starting from the word and the privilege of naming" (Derrida 2002, p. 120). This arrogance is unfounded, if words are followed through, if we travel where the word travels, if we go where it goes. For the same god, who gave the singular word, also scripted its impossibility. He dealt with the people of Shinar, who were building a tower to reach the heavens, to equal their maker. He "confound their language, that they

may not understand one another's speech" (Genesis 11:9, King James Bible). The Tower of Babel meant the creation of language situations in time and space that were irreducible to each other and yet fervently coexisted. The naming of oneself has frequently been called upon as the distinctive, as the overwhelming act performed by self-identifying gay and lesbian people. However, it is in the tacticality of this naming that the animation lies. It is in the differential repeatability of names within the volume and duration of any given personal narrative that excitement lies, both political and intellectual.

CONCLUSION

From all I did and all I said
let no one try to find out who I was.
An obstacle was there that changed the pattern
of my actions and the manner of my life.
An obstacle was often there
to stop me when I'd begin to speak.
From my most unnoticed actions,
my most veiled writing—
from these alone will I be understood.
But maybe it isn't worth so much concern,
so much effort to discover who I really am.
Later, in a more perfect society,
someone else made just like me
is certain to appear and act freely.

(Constantine P. Cavafy, 'Hidden Things').

Activisms around sexuality have considered the narratives of the personal as worthy of much of its concern and effort. They have put together particular opportunities for voicing the personal, of writing all its unwritten parts. They have tried to remove all obstacles between narrators and speech. They have approached their writers and interviewees with repeated requests of transcribing their true feelings, their innermost

secrets, their most difficult troubles and life experiences. Much like Freud's eye would have caught the body language of his patients and his ear their slips of tongue as evidence of the actual matter at hand, as proof of the real problem of his patients, queer activisms have noticed the most unnoticed actions and unveiled the most veiled writing in a bid to understand the living reality of those they fight for. In a bid to mobilise particular sexual identities as the provisional bases of their many fights.

The personal narratives, however, have played around with these sexual identities and with the concept of sexuality itself. A close reading of the textual sprawl of personal narratives reveals only a tactical ordering of different identity-based subject positions. Reading each of these narratives offers different and often conflicting ways of referencing same-sex desire and those who experience it. Instead of pointing towards some defined and naturalised *sexuality*-based subject positions, all those recounted experiences of the narratives only end up foregrounding the processes by which these positions come to be adopted, how they come to be proudly owned, flexibly changed, dropped altogether or made banal. The personal narratives evidence an implicit doubleness in the life of sexuality, especially as it is lived out in activism around sexual identity. Even as the texts are triggered by and apparently made to cater to a few defining frameworks of activism, they also bring to activists a working knowledge about these frameworks, of their use and harms. They pitch a need for activism to constantly remodel itself. For activists to keep questioning their primary strategies, their pivotal concepts. Above all, the narratives detranscendentalise sexuality. They historicise it within a political and social everyday. They overturn and exceed Freud even as they cite him.

5

The Doubleness of Gay Writing

This chapter delves into the moment of production of "India's first gay anthology" *Yaraana: Gay Writing from India* (Merchant 1999, p. x) to argue for the doubleness of the genre of 'gay writing'. Based on extensive conversations with the editor of the book, Hoshang Merchant, it looks not only into the cover-page claims of the book and its editor, but also into the nitty-gritty of the production of such a book. The chapter proposes that although the genre of gay writing claims the idea of the embodied 'sexuality' of its authors or characters as its primary constitutive criterion, the collections themselves, more often than not, end up also demystifying such criteria, and operate through more wide-ranging and pragmatic rationales of selection, which are often non-'sexuality' oriented, mobilising an extensive line-up of authors and content that defies any easy or obvious categorisation. It further proposes that these constitutive contradictions of the genre of gay writing are loosely available to those putting it together, who become as much the

From Masculinity and Its Challenges in India: Essays on Changing Perceptions © 2014 *Edited by* Rohit K. Dasgupta *and* K. Moti Gokulsing by permission of McFarland & Company, Inc., Box 611, Jefferson NC 28640. www. mcfarlandpub.com.

vehicles of this doubleness as they are its partakers. The chapter ends with a brief look at the commercial category of 'gay writing' where concerns of marketability end up counterweighing the conceit of embodiment within the concept of sexuality.

THE MOURNING

When the Kashmiri-American poet Agha Shahid Ali (b. 1949) died in Amherst, Massachusetts in the winter of 2001, an acquaintance of his organised a memorial on the 40th day after his death, the chehlom, the last day of mourning in the Islamic calendar. [1] Hoshang Merchant (b. 1947), lesser known as a poet than Ali but an abiding enthusiast of his verse, organised this gathering in Hyderabad, a city where he has been teaching literature and writing poetry for years. [2] It was held at the Vidyanarayan School on 14 January 2002. "When she died," Hoshang said referring to Shahid, "I had a maha sabha [huge gathering] here with my money [*sic*]" (personal interview with Merchant, July 2010). "I called it a 'Celebration of Shahid Ali's Life and Poetry' and invited Munna, the sister-in-law of Shahid's sister Sameetah who is my neighbour from down the street here, as the chief guest" (ibid.). "I served walnut cake in sherry, grape juice and Golconda wine as a nod towards Kashmir, towards the resurrection of Ali's spirit in heaven, and for his poetry" (ibid.). Hoshang wrote a poem for the occasion called 'Death of a Poet: 1.1.2002' as a gesture of remembrance and, I think, as a gesture

[1] Agha Shahid Ali (1949–2001) was a Kashmiri-American poet and taught in several creative writing departments across the United States. Ali was awarded the Guggenheim and Ingram-Merril Fellowships and a Pushcart Prize. His collection *Rooms are Never Finished* was a finalist for the National Book Award in 2001. His poems were published in a collection titled *The Veiled Suite*.

[2] Hoshang Merchant (b. 1947) is a poet and a professor of English based in Hyderabad in Andhra Pradesh, India. He has written more than 13 books of poetry. He is the editor of *Yaraana: Gay Writing from India* (1999).

which claimed a form of friendship with the deceased, as if to say that it was strong enough to personally organise a meeting of remembrance, to write a poem on the poet who had gone, and to effectively aver a posthumous closeness with him, a closeness that he had yearned for but never quite achieved when Shahid had been around.

"On the way to the optician," Merchant wrote in his elegy, "I saw a Kashmiri shawl-vendor / trying the gate of a great house / I remembered Shahid Ali / I want to be a golden paisley / On the black shawl of Kashmir" (personal copy, 2002). The poem was a tribute to Ali both in its form and its occasion of composition. It used some of Ali's favourite images, the striking fabrics of Kashmir, its designs and motifs and it invoked Ali's favorite topography, that of the snow clad mountains of the Kashmir valley—"mountains of dry ice," Hoshang wrote, "ice like glass" (personal interview with Merchant, July 2010). At the gathering Merchant read Ali's poem 'The country without a post-office', "sobbed rather than read it," he told me, along with his own poem for Ali. The Hyderabad-based Urdu poet Jameela Nishaat (b. 1955), a friend of Merchant, read her poem for Ali which she had written for the chehlom; some of Merchant's students read Ali's popular poems like 'The Dacca Gauzes' and 'Dream of Glass Bangles'. "I repeated the event for Ismat Mehdi's Poetry Society, the Hyderabad chapter of the London-based association," Merchant recounted, "[t]here was not a dry eye in the audience on both occasions" (ibid.). This was the most intimate experience Hoshang had had with Shahid Ali, an intimacy that could not be disputed in Ali's death, in the unavailability of his response.

HOSHANG/SHAHID, OR, WHAT IS GAY WRITING?

Around five years before he died, in mid-1996, Agha Shahid Ali had refused to be a part of a collection of writings that Merchant was putting together. It was ultimately published in 1999 as

Yaraana: Gay Writing from India, with a strong marketing pitch of being "India's first gay anthology" (Merchant 1999, p. x).[3] "I am humbled," Hoshang had written in the July of that year, "to have been entrusted with defining the historic moment for India's homosexuals through their literature, old and new, heroic or pedestrian, lovely and lovelorn or rough and ironic' (Merchant 1999, p. xxv).

Hoshang told me that it was not easy at all to put together that collection. He repeatedly said that "there were slim-pickings"; "I picked up anyone and put them in"; "I was a despo lesbo" (personal interview, July 2010). Ali's refusal had "crushed" him (ibid.). He tried to persuade Ali by continuing the correspondence between Amherst and New York City, where Ali was based in the late 1990s, and Hyderabad, where he himself lived, but to no avail. The collection went into print without Agha Shahid Ali.

Hoshang remembers Ali's refusal as a snub, a "perfidy" and "perfidies", he told me campily, "even if they can be understood are never forgiven" (ibid.). The introduction to *Yaraana* carried Hoshang's final, hostile dart—"[t]he problem with India's gay literary elite is that most of them (here I'm talking of Indian writers in English) are still in the closet. Some do not want to be identified as gay…" (Merchant 1999, p. xvi). "Were you referring to Shahid in particular when you wrote that?" I had asked him, to which he had replied with an unequivocal "yes" (personal interview). "I understood his reasons only later, earlier I thought he was just being mean…I was just a confused fairy then" (ibid.).

This chapter uses the moment of Ali's refusal to Hoshang as an entry point to ask and answer some crucial questions about the concept of gay writing. It tries to sieve out its various dimensions: that of gay writing (or lesbian writing) as a publishing phenomenon, as a political imperative for liberation and rights,

[3] *Yaraana* is the Urdu and Hindi word for friendship in general, and male friendship in particular. The *yaar* is the male friend.

as a perceived foil for 'great writing' and as a literary style and form.[4] Most importantly, however, it will trace a significant

[4] Gay writing, like its other identity-driven counterparts women's writing and black writing, has often been seen as a foil of 'great writing'. Although it is commonly realised that the raison d'être of gay writing is not whether it is good or bad but that it has a temporary and urgent political function to serve, or a gay market to cater to, still these categories have often been held in opposition to each other. Hoshang wrote in an essay on Ali, one might contend slightly underestimating Ali's oeuvre, that "[c]ritics say [that the Italian Pier Paolo] Pasolini's transcendence is not to be found in Ali or in my poetry. In other words, we're stuck with the boys" whereas Pasolini has gone on to become the "epic poet of the slums of post-World War II Rome" (2007, p. 467). In my interview, Hoshang mentioned this conceit of "transcendence" (from gay to great) several times. He, however, was conflicted whether this transcendence comes in the form of "hiding" the experiences, one's own or the characters', of love for the same sex, or in "going beyond the shame of talking about oneself and one's characters in the terms of those experiences" (ibid.). Here he likened "gay", "women" or "black" as the "shoe which is pinching you" and something you need to pacify before you get on to the calmer, greater writing. Hoshang recounted Hopkins, Melville, Dickinson, Pasolini and Shakespeare, among others, as writers who had made this so-called transcendent leap in their writings. He excluded himself from the list. Though he maintained that there is still a need for "gay" collections for several reasons, including "to dispel homophobia with knowledge, openness and achievement, to say we're not a lunatic fringe, we're right there in the centre of it all," he wrote, while introducing his own "gay anthology", against the tendency in the "new gay academic mafia", which he undeniably shares, to "fit all literature into a form of their own special pleading" (1999, p. xvii). He suggested instead that "there is a literature above one's own special pleading, the sonnets of Shakespeare, for example, being products of genius rather than homosexual mania" (ibid.). Hoshang, as can be seen, is in the legacy of the perceived split between the agendas of gay writing and great writing. Vikram Seth has poeticised this split between gay and great famously in his limmerick: "Some men like Jack and some like Jill / I'm glad I like them both but still / I wonder if this freewheeling / Really is an enlightened thing, / Or is its greater scope a sign / Of deviance from some party line? / In the strict ranks of Gay and Straight / What is my status: Stray? Or Great?" Manchester-based writer and reviewer Jonathan Statham told me in an email conversation that this legacy of the split is based

doubleness between the ways it is often conceived and the ways it is actually put together, where it is both proposed to be a machine of expression for 'certain' people and 'certain' embodied sexualities, that is, an exceptionalist endeavour, but at the same time, also becomes effectively anti-exceptionalist, mobilising a whole range of authors and characters without overly fetishising their sexuality.

WHY ONLY GAY FOLK CAN WRITE GAY, OR, THE EXCEPTIONALIST ART OF GAY WRITING

In 1996 when Hoshang started asking for contributions for his forthcoming collection, he told potential contributors, "I'm writing a gay anthology and you must come out as gay" (personal interview, July 2010). With the scope of this demand and the way it was framed, Ali's refusal to be included was read as a refusal to "come out"; "[t]hat crazy pussy, she wasn't ready to come out…he wanted to be the poet laureate of a Taliban state called 'Azad Kashmir'," Hoshang said, smiling, exaggeratedly, with a studied superficiality with Kashmir's history but with the sense of being wronged intact.

In an interview Hoshang with the writer R. Raj Rao, he talked

on two assumptions: one, "…that great writing transcends all categories, that it is somehow above any label you might put on it", as if *Moby Dick* is not a "sea novel", an "adventure novel", an "American national allegory", a "quest narrative" or all of these, and (b) that we always fail to see categories as anything other than limitations, instead of which Jonathan suggested, "to be gay, as either writing or a person, is not to have a limit, it is to have a dimension. It is, after all, necessary to be something (gay, straight, bi, whatever), indeed to be many things [at many times], and not just an abstract anything. Gay writing is writing that has a gay dimension (which does not prevent it having others)" (2010). American playwright Tony Kushner's 'Angels in America', one could say, is an AIDS drama, a magic realist play, a gay play, a commentary on religion, an empathetic indictment of contemporary American society, a gay fantasia on national themes, a cerebral piece, et al.

at length and with some sourness about Ali's refusal. "Then there were living gays," he said, "bright, luminaries, who refused to state publicly in India that they were gay, while living deliciously gay lives in the West. As you can see, the first enemy is always within. Now that Aga Shahid Ali," he continued, "is dead, a person whose poetry I thought as if he were Shakespeare, I can briefly sketch for you the heart-breaking pleading correspondence I had with a totally evasive man—no," he says, thinking about several possible reasons for Shahid's refusal but finally zoning on his desired role as a "national poet" of a free Kashmir as pivotal, "it was not the fear of losing an inheritance, nor a fear of an *outing*, not the fear of paining one's devout parents, nor incriminating one's friends…No, it was something quite else… Ali was already courting the Indian nation's displeasure once [vis-ṁ-vis Kashmir]. And he did not want to do it twice over—also *as a gay*" (quoted in Rao 2009, p. 7, emphasis mine).[5]

"It was one of Shahid's contradictions," Shahid's lifelong close friend Saleem Kidwai told me in a bookshop in central Lucknow, in a mellower tone and with a sense of understanding that comes from years of friendship and love, "not giving us permission to publish anything in *Same-Sex Love* while he was being published in a gay anthology in America (personal interview with Saleem Kidwai, July 2010). Saleem was a contemporary of Ali in Delhi University in the late 1960s and early 1970s; he studied History at St. Stephens College and Ali studied and then taught English at Hindu College, across the road from Saleem.

[5] In his obituary for his friend Shahid Ali, the author Amitav Ghosh retells an episode when he talked with Ali about his possible role as a national poet for Kashmir: "I once remarked to Shahid," he writes, "that he was the closest that Kashmir had to a national poet. He shot back: 'A national poet, maybe. But not a nationalist poet; please not that.'" "If anything, Kashmir's current plight," Ghosh continued, "represented for him the failure of the emancipatory promise of nationhood and the extinction of the pluralistic ideal that had been so dear to intellectuals of his [Shahid's] father's generation" (Ghosh 2002, p. 14).

Saleem along with Ruth Vanita, another Delhi University friend, were to be the editors of *Same-Sex Love in India: Readings from Literature and History* (2000) that was published a year after *Yaraana*. It was bigger in scope and intention, a more enduring collection, it would seem, including material about same-sex desire from ancient and medieval India and from its Sanskritic and Perso-Urdu traditions. For its last section on 'Modern Indian Materials', which included works of writers like Rajendra Yadav and Suryakant Tripathi Nirala, Vikram Seth and Hoshang Merchant, Saleem had corresponded with his old friend Shahid and asked for his poetry. But Ali was being difficult, as only friends can be.

Saleem remembers asking him "why have you not been answering my letters, why are you not giving me permission?" (personal interview with Saleem Kidwai, July 2010). Ali had replied that he "could not stand Hoshang" who had been "pestering him" and "wanted something, anything" for his volume (ibid.). "Are you equating me with Hoshang," Saleem had asked, "no no," Shahid had replied. Saleem remembers his words, "I don't want to be outed in India, for the sake of my father… Kashmir is another world…because it will hurt his image."

Shahid Ali's father was Agha Ashraf Ali who was the Jammu and Kashmir Inspector of Schools in the 1950s, "a teacher of teachers" (Ashraf Ali, quoted in Lepeska 2010) in his own words, and the Director of Education for all of Jammu and Kashmir by 1971. Taught when he was 20 by Dr Zakir Hussain, the future president of independent India, influenced by the Kashmiri leader Sheikh Abdullah's politics when he was older, educated in England and seduced by the philosophy of Martin Buber, Ashraf Ali belonged to one of the more important political families in Kashmir influencing its education and bureaucracy. "It's still such a feudal system there," Ali had once told his friend and writer Amitav Ghosh, talking about Kashmir where he wanted to die, in the last days of his illness on the East Coast, "and there

will be so much support—and my father is there too" (quoted in Ghosh 2002, p. 15). It was this net that Ali did not want to overtly disturb, the net held in place by the figure of his father and his friends, by writing in books about 'same-sex love' or of 'gay writing', things which his father's world did not realise in the same way or in the same terms.

It was a step that looked like a "fear of a witch-hunt" to the acquaintance and fellow poet Hoshang (1999, p. xvi), like an irreducible "contradiction" to the friend, Saleem (2010) and like a wish for preserving one of his many worlds to Shahid Ali himself ('I don't want to…').[6] The step was undoubtedly based on the idea, a strong and not unusual assumption that is implicit in the very origin and the development of the genre of gay writing, that to write for its anthologies is to evidently identify oneself as 'gay', an assumption that Shahid Ali reasonably shared with Hoshang, for all their differences. That to be included in such a collection is also to be marked. Hoshang's call to his contributors to write was also, by his own admission, a call to come out. Saleem's *Same-Sex Love*, unattached as it was to any direct identifying marker unlike *Yaraana* which had "gay" on its cover, was a better bet in this respect. It included, in its "modern" section, the Bengali writer Bankim Chandra Chatterjee, the Urdu writer Ismat Chughtai and the Hindi writer Rajendra Yadav, writers who have been known to produce situations of same-sex desire in their stories, but not

[6] In the teeth of Ali's continuing refusal to be in his volume, Hoshang had sent him a long letter that listed, he told me, "eight possible reasons according to me why the queen refused to be in my book" (personal interview, 2010). These reasons, some more serious than others, included, Hoshang recalls, "security of job, the sanctity his father's circles, his inheritance, his fame as a poet, his wanting to remain a mainstream American poet and not a marginalized one, a future marriage, his image in Kashmir, etc." (ibid.) Ali wrote back a letter saying, Hoshang recounts, "it's none of these, I'll tell you when I'm in Hyderabad…He never came, he was mad, such illusions of grandeur but I have known in my time Palestinian queens in Germany who wouldn't say it because they would lose their scholarship' (ibid.).

majorly in their biographies. But Ali had desisted, it seems, even from the very proximity of association and the distinct possibility of that news reaching his father's Kashmiri circles. With Hoshang, the game had always been simpler, hence the refusal had been more blunt; "[w]hat qualifies one to write for a gay anthology?" I had asked Hoshang during the two-day interview at his house in Hyderabad. His immediate answer was "you need to be a gay person writing about gay experiences."

Who can produce lesbian writing or gay writing? With whom lies the wherewithal of writing a lesbian story? Who cannot write a gay poem? These questions are old and have been answered as often with certainty as with uncertainty. When we call a piece of writing a lesbian story, what is the final clincher for us in making that call? Is it the content and themes of that story, its form and language, the situations and relationships that come about within them; is it the sexuality as experienced by the specific body of the story writer, or some combination of these? Where does the buck finally stop in deciding whether a story qualifies or not as a gay story? What is the factor that matters in making this decision or that which matters the most?

It seems that lesbian writing (or gay writing) has sourced itself so strongly from the particularised body of the writer, that any other way of creating lesbian writing seemed for long quite impossible. Only certain people, only certain kinds of bodies could write that story. It was a one-to-one connection between the kind of writer and the kind of writing. "If you're straight," Hoshang told me, "and you write about gay experience, that is mere titillation," not quite writing in his scheme of things or not yet (personal interview, July 2010). "Your experience in London with women," he told me, "does not make you bisexual, it's mere titillation" (ibid.). Lesbian writing or gay writing is mostly conceived as copyrighted on to lesbian and gay bodies; it is their sole preserve, possible only within them. This copyright condition shares its moment of incipience with that form of writing itself.

In the late 1920s, when Radclyffe Hall (b. 1880) was thinking about writing *The Well of Loneliness* (published 1928), nowadays usually recalled as a lesbian classic, she had gone to her lifelong friend and lover Lady Una Troubridge to talk about what she was going to do, and what she feared and was excited about at that moment. Una had later recorded their conversation in her diary:

> It was after the success of Adam's Breed that John came to me one day with unusual gravity and asked for my decision in a serious matter: she had long wanted to write a book on sexual inversion, a novel that would be accessible to the general public who did not have access to technical treatises…It was her absolute conviction that *such a book could only be written by a sexual invert, who alone could be qualified by personal knowledge and experience to speak on behalf of a misunderstood and misjudged minority* (Troubridge quoted in Knopp 1992, p. 114, emphasis mine)

The exceptionalism of lesbian writing, the idea that only some unique people can write it, has for long had a political valence. It was conceived as a project to be taken up, to compensate for all the writing that 'others' have done for 'us', all the representing that 'they' have gone on doing, where 'we' have been ridiculed, misjudged and caricatured. It was implicit that others had either a lack of will or certainly a lack of imagination to even comprehend the experience of living as a lesbian and then writing about it. "[P]ersonal knowledge and experience," Hall mentioned to Una, are the hallmarks that qualify one to write such stories. But, more importantly, we should ask, where is this "personal knowledge and experience" grafted? Are different kinds of people even capable of it? What is the place that holds this knowledge and experience and works it out? "[O]nly" the body of the "sexual invert" (Troubridge quoted in Knopp 1992, p. 114). Lesbian writing is seen always as emerging from a signature body, a body that the late 19th century sexologists, with their extensive technical treatises, had given their hearts and minds to popularise, to make it the fundamental way of seeing people. Hall's heroine

in the novel, Stephen Gordon, literally discovered herself in one of those treatises, the works of the Austro-German sexologist and psychiatrist Richard von Krafft-Ebing (1840–1902).

Around the late 1990s, when Ashwini Sukhthankar, in her early 20s, was putting together the 'first' collection of 'lesbian writing from India' called *Facing the Mirror*, commissioned by the same publisher as *Yaraana* and published in the same year, she had to get some pieces translated into English from the regional Indian languages. She arranged for a specific team to do this job. "Some pieces were translated…by other lesbian- and bisexual-identified women, of course: a translator has to be wholly faithful to her author's tongue, the nuance and the music of it, and we could not expect such fidelity from someone with a different erotic awareness" (Sukhthankar 1999, p. xxi, emphasis mine). She who does not identify as lesbian or bisexual is incapable of the translator's fidelity, of course.

Where does the confidence of Sukhthankar's "of course" emerge? What hedges in lesbian emotion, its nuance and music, and makes it untranslatable by others? What is the premise of this distrust, this fundamental lack of expectation and the scepticism for the translator of "a different erotic awareness"? The anthologising of lesbian writing changes, to an extent, the very terms whereby the translators are chosen, now not wholly depending on their familiarity with the two languages involved, or here, even with the subject of eroticism, but another sort of familiarity, one that is routed through the translator's particular body, through a specific kind of "erotic awareness". The terms of inclusion for the translator are the terms of her body.

This is unsurprising. Sukhthankar, after all, a student of comparative literature at Harvard, figures in a dense lineage of feminist, lesbian theorists, editors and writers who began their search for lesbian writing with the body of the writer and only later came to the shape, quality and content of that writing. They have placed writing in the body; "[w]rite your self, Your

body must be heard" (Cixous 1976, p. 880). They have seen and struggled to establish an essential and implicit connection between the two, where the body furnishes or yields the writing, is inextricable from the content. "'[W]riting'," Sukhthankar asserts, in the line before she talks about the translation, "signifies the gritty imperfect media through which the body, with its yearning and its suffering, spoke out; the process though which our lives, put into the tangibility of words, could be made public" (1999, p. xxi, emphasis mine). The first point of departure for lesbian writing, its original fountainhead, is the very tangible body of the writer. Without it, Sukhthankar seems to say, the writing is not "wholly faithful", what Hoshang, in cruder terms, had called "titillation". Without it, it seems to be a lesser form of writing, pleasurable yes but not valid enough. Shahid Ali had refused, it is probable, because, for anyone to see his works in a gay anthology, especially for his father's circles in Kashmir, would make them not only parse his writing but more crucially automatically parse his body itself, make decisions on its behalf, carry over the interpretations from their reading. That's what gay writing does to the body of the writer by locating it as its final source and inspiration, by making the body the source of all literary imagination and the final grail of all interpretation. The very act of writing it is an exercise in exceptionalism, it is saying something unique about your own body, about your own "erotic awareness".

Identity-based struggles in the 1960s and 1970s in Europe and the United States revolved around the body and made it the exceptional factor in representation, and the main qualifier of who can perform the critical task of representing at hand. The specific forms that have done this writing and showing, for women, blacks and lesbians and gay men, have always zoned in on the body—the portrait in photography, the talking heads in documentaries and the personal narratives in writing. The feminist manifestos that came out in the 1970s and called loudly for launching the genre

of women's writing in good earnest located women's bodies, in particular, as their unequivocal source and trigger. The bodies have to be mined for writing, so certain bodies become capable of that writing and others implicitly do not. It was not framed mainly as a question of political imagination but instead as that of bodily experience—body as experiencing desire, body as experiencing assault. Not on what you think but instead on what you are, viscerally, bodily. In fact, the body was seen as the basic marker of experience. French feminist activist and writer Helene Cixous' watershed essay 'The Laugh of the Medusa' appeared bang in the middle of the 1970s in the journal *Signs* and asked the women "to write. An act which would not only 'realize' the decensored relation of woman to her sexuality, to her womanly being...it will give her back her goods," she claimed, "her pleasures, her immense bodily territories which have been kept under seal" (Cixous 1976, p. 880). All of Cixous's metaphors recruit the body as the wellspring of writing. To make "her shattering entry into history" the woman must lay bare, let her flesh speak true, write in the "white ink" of her "good mother's milk" (ibid., pp. 880–81). The visceral metaphors condense into what seems like a common denominator of īcriture fīminine: "a woman's body, with its thousand and one thresholds of ardor—once, by smashing yokes and censors, she lets it articulate the profusion of meanings that run through it..." (ibid., p. 885).

In the same decade as Cixous's essay, the major political conceit, the main strategy that dominated the 1970s Gay Liberation in Europe and the United States was something that depended on the complete visibility of the individual body: coming out. One of its major and first slogans directly choreographed the movement of this body: "Out of the closets! Onto the streets!" "The name of the Italian gay liberation movement, Fuori, means Out; in its newspaper it declared: 'What are we asking of you? To come out!'" (Richmond and Noguera 1973, p. 154). Carl Wittman's 'Gay Manifesto', first published in the San Francisco Free Press at the

end of 1969, begins its list of "imperatives of gay liberation" with "Free ourselves; come out everywhere" (1972, p. 341; quoted in Dyer 2003, p. 232). Hoshang Merchant was the inheritor of this atmosphere of the 1970s post-Stonewall America. During this decade he finished his masters at Occidental College in Los Angeles and then went on to study for his PhD on Anañs Nin at the University of Purdue in West Lafayette, Indiana. His days at Purdue were the early days of the post-Stonewall coming out form of politics, a form that was held to be urgent, very exciting and politically useful. Hoshang cites this moment usually in his introductions at panels, on book covers and in poetry meetings: "[h]e helped establish the Gay Liberation at Purdue" (1999). His book was the logical culmination of this form of politics that he had soaked up in his years in the United States and Europe, a form of politics that sees gay writing as the business only of gay bodies who automatically come out when they publish in gay anthologies. During our conversations over three days about gay writing, the only book that Hoshang ever picked up to quote to me, out of the clumsy pile of books in his living room, was the one edited by David Bergman. It was called *The Violet Quill Reader: The Emergence of Gay Writing After Stonewall* (1994).[7]

[7] The American magazine *Publishers Weekly* described Bergman's book in the following words (why this would influence Hoshang's ideas about gay writing becomes amply clear): "n 1980 and 1981, seven prominent gay authors—Edmund White, Andrew Holleran, Christopher Cox, Michael Grumley, Robert Ferro, Felice Picano and George Whitmore—met to discuss and read their writings. Known informally as the Violet Quill Club, they shared a desire to write works that reflected their gay experiences, works aimed specifically at gay readers who would not challenge their point of view. Collectively, the notoriety and writings of the Violet Quill changed the course of gay literature, replacing the longstanding image of the doomed or martyred homosexual with one of active protagonists speaking, as Bergman (Gaiety Transfigured) puts it, the 'language gay men use among themselves'...this anthology consists of...White's letter to friends about his participation in the Stonewall Riots... several excerpts from novels, many of them written during the heady disco era of the 1970s and

WHY ONLY GAY PEOPLE DON'T WRITE GAY: THE ANTI-EXCEPTIONALIST ART OF GAY WRITING

Long conversations are capable of yielding contradictions, of revealing a form of doubleness that turns the thing on itself and says its opposite in the same breath. Such conversations, that last longer than the purpose of getting a sound byte or a quote, often question their own premise, acknowledge that there is more than one way in which a particular thing works, that there are different models of functioning, interpreting and of remembering, and they leave you with a sense that all these models are acting together without much problem other than those that are the interpreter's.

My conversation with Hoshang lasted over 3 days. It took place mainly in the living room of his one bedroom apartment on the seventh floor of a building called 'Garden Towers' in the Masab Tank area in Hyderabad. The living room was quite open and spare, with a settee, a sitting space put together with a *dari* and some pillows, and shelves and piles of books in two corners. The house was airy and had signs of being lived in for long. I mostly sat on the carpet or on the small *moda* (cane stool) in the living room; Hoshang alternated between sprawling on the settee in his thin *lungi*, or running in and out of the small kitchen to

depicting gay life in Manhattan and Fire Island...subsequent selections reveal not only the uneven talents within the group but also the maturation of some of its writers...life histories can be pieced together from Bergman's notes to each selection and from one of the anthology's chief delights, extracts from the unpublished journals of Picano and Grumley, and from correspondence between Ferro and Holleran. Four members of the Violet Quill have been lost to AIDS and a fifth is reported ill; in the later selections, the writers grapple with the disease in fiction and nonfiction, as both plotlines and personal lives become rewritten. The most powerful moment of the anthology occurs, in fact, when, following Ferro's death, Holleran examines his more than 20 years of friendship with that writer. Bergman notes that 'the theme of friendship unites all the fiction of the Violet Quill . . . a theme that, more than any other, separates gay fiction from straight fiction'; as Holleran says, 'It really was a brotherhood.'"

get me something to eat, insisting that I eat something or drink juice every two hours, or sometimes getting me different kinds of Hoshang memorabilia—snippets from his six-decade life in three continents—from his bedroom which I could see from where I sat. All the doors of the living room, including the one which opened on to the shared floor area outside and the one on to the balcony, were in a permanent state of openness. We could hear the neighbours when they stepped out or even see them, and the sounds of the city poured in from the seventh floor living room balcony from where you could see, Hoshang pointed out, the Char Minar (Mosque of the Four Minarets, built 1591) and the Mecca Masjid, and from the bedroom balcony, the staccato heights of the medieval Golconda Fort. Hoshang's poetry collection that came out in 1992 was called *Hotel Golkonda*, one of his favourite haunts in Hyderabad.

When we were not in his house, he showed me the city, like its patron saint, taking me to the Friday night *dargah* (Sufi shrine) music gatherings, introducing me to the head priest of the *dargah*, who was also an antique collector, in a high-kitsch living room with more than 10 chandeliers, meeting my friends from the University of Hyderabad where he taught, feeding me at different old city restaurants and refusing to let me pay, and taking an auto ride around the Fort while it rained heavily. All this while, the conversation was on, about him, about Shahid Ali, about his and my sex life and about Hyderabad. In the titular poem in *Hotel Golkonda*, Hoshang writes "I was reprimanded always for talking too much" (Merchant 1992, p. 30). Hoshang was a friend, a flirt and a grandfather, seamlessly. I could see that he enjoyed the former roles, performed them to an excess but sometimes, not infrequently, resigned to the hexagenarian sobriety of the latter. These changes of attitudes, that are implicit in the length of the conversations, also inflected his idea of gay writing and the use or uselessness of the category of the gay writer and of the very act of anthologising.

One of the first stories to become progressively more layered was the story of how the anthology was put together. Hoshang knew that there was an assortment of potential contributors for his volume if he only threw his net wide enough. This meant having a very flexible working idea of what goes into a gay anthology rather than the more stingy gay-writer-writing-about-gay-experiences formula that Hoshang had advanced to me more than once.

When Hoshang had gotten in touch with the Urdu/Punjabi writer Gyansingh Shatir (b. 1935), he changed his call, altered it considerably to not put him off. "I did not tell them gay-shay," Hoshang said with a distinct sense of cunning, "I told them *dosti* [friendship], *uske baare mein hai* ['it is about that']" and then "once they gave their consent, *phir usko chakka banaya* [then I made him an eunuch]" (claps his hands, personal interview, July 2010). Shatir's six-page story 'Never Take Candy From a Stranger!' had little to do, if at all, with friendship. It is written in the autobiographical mode and is about the pleasurable experiences of a fair young boy in a Punjab village whose beauty, classically enough, is his boon and his bane, leading to a brutal climactic episode of assault by an older man. The story spins around on the saying in Shatir's village: "God must not bless anyone with fair colour / It is like inviting the enmity of the whole town" (Shatir 1999, p. 152) and ends with a numbed protagonist who is unable to take gifts from "anybody", even his "dear friends" (ibid., p. 157).

Hoshang knew he was playing with categories when he was editing this collection, enjoying outwitting the *shatirs* in the business (*shatir* in Urdu means 'chess player' but generally implies 'the cunning one') who would fall for one kind of frame, one kind of call for contributions but not for another. Different writers for this one gay anthology posed different exigent situations. The premise of the call sent to Shahid Ali underwent a transformation by the time it was extended to Shatir, from being based heavily

on the sexual identity of the writer, on experience ratified by his body, it came to be based mainly on the content of friendship. The label 'gay' itself metamorphosed into a more flippant version in Hoshang's head—gay-shay, using a common Hindi linguistic manoeuvre whereby words are informalised, made casual by being accompanied by their assonants (*chai*-shai, plan-shlan). Anthologising the collection was an exercise in such fundamental revisions of what it meant to write 'gay' and what it meant to use or discard this cachet of the gay writer.

Even the iconic manifestos of identity-based writing are not immune to such basic revisions of what it means to be woman, gay, dalit or black. Helene Cixous, who had found all writing by women as rooted in their bodies ("[w]omen must write through their bodies"), lets her essay surprise the readers by betraying this logic quite often enough to be considered a consistent parallel track in the work (Cixous 1976, p. 886). This happens when she first faces the problem as to "[w]hich works, then, might be called feminine" (ibid., p. 878) head on. Whereas she defers the question as to 'what is pervasively feminine' in these texts—a question that she picks up later but only skittishly—she see an immense poverty of real "feminine" writing in her home country France. "[T]he only inscriptions of femininity that I have seen," she says, "are by Colette, Marguerite Duras...and Jean Genet" (ibid., p. 879, ellipsis in original).[8] There is an odd-man-out in Cixous' list, a man who is incapable of living out of a woman's body but is nevertheless capable of making a "feminine" text.

How is this possible? This is the precise doubleness of women's writing that is shot through Cixous' essay and that expands its catchment area of writers to beyond those who are female bodied.

[8] Jean Genet (1910–86) was a major French novelist, playwright, poet, filmmaker and political activist. His major works include the novels *Querelle of Brest*, *The Thief's Journal* and *Our Lady of the Flowers* and the plays *The Balcony*, *The Blacks*, *The Maids* and *The Screens*. His reputation as a petty thief, gotten early in life, was to abide through his writing career.

Here Cixous sees femininity not as residing in one's body but instead in one's politics. This is a major revision of the criterion of who gets into the fold. A feminine text is not a text written by women. In fact Cixous "deducts" from her list that "species of female writers" which is an "immense majority" and "whose workmanship is in no way different from male writing" (ibid., p. 878). Feminine or masculine here are not a body thing, they are placeholders for political viewpoints. The feminine text is one that "cannot fail to be more than subversive", it is an essay that sees "more closely the inanity of [all] 'propriety'" and it is in the hands of those writers, female or male or otherwise, "who would go to any lengths to slip something at odds with tradition" (Cixous 1976, pp. 888, 879). The masculine text, on the other hand, is tradition-bound and status-quoesque. In this scheme of things, the feminine text skirts the route of the writer's body and finally comes to sit in the writer's worldview. The condition of women's writing being "from and toward women", offered by Cixous herself, is kept at bay to elaborate another simultaneous way of seeing and scripting "women's writing" (ibid., p. 881). When Cixous tries to persuade her readers that the mythical "dark continent" (ibid., p. 884) of womanhood is actually not that dark or impervious at all, she tells them of a short Dantesque trip she took—"... the continent is not impenetrably dark. I've been there often. I was overjoyed one day to run into Jean Genet. It was in Pompes funebres. He had come there led by his Jean. There are some men (all too few) who aren't afraid of femininity" (ibid., 885).

In December 1998 in Bombay, when Ashwini Sukhthankar started taking stock of all the contributions that she had received for her collection on lesbian writing in India, she paused before she went ahead and made the political choice of clubbing them all together as 'lesbian writing'. This moment of pause became the introduction to her edited volume published the next year. "We are all lesbians," Ashwini claimed for each of her contributors, "... but what that means is not necessarily obvious" (1999, p. xxvii).

Here the word slipped out of her editorial control and political strategy, and became specific for each contribution to the book. "[F]or some," she relented, "it signifies purely the erotic", for some "lesbianism is in part a deliberate stance adopted in opposition to patriarchy", for some it "indicates a totality of women-centered lives, which we lead for and with each other", for some "lesbian" is taken up and dropped casually, some grow into and some out of it, whereas some "just want to be" it, rather than "attend conferences about it" (Sukhthankar 1999, pp. xxvii–xxix). Some refused to identify themselves as lesbian preferring homegrown labels like *samyonik* (in Sanskrit *sam* is union, *yoni* is vagina) or *saheli* (female friend). Others had no truck with the term at all.

This had become amply clear to Hoshang when he had set about finding a "gay poem" in the oeuvre of the Allahabad Urdu poet Firaq Gorakhpuri (1896–1982; Merchant 1999, p. 208). Gorakhpuri, which was the poetic alias of Raghupati Sahay, was a prominent Urdu poet and a teacher of Romantic poetry in the Department of English at Allahabad University. He was reportedly the Prime-Minister-to-be Jawaharlal Nehru's teacher during his university education in Allahabad.

In the late 1980s when the anthropologist Lawrence Cohen spent some of his time in Varanasi and stayed in hostel rooms at the Banaras Hindu University, he got into several discussions about the then recently deceased Firaq with the M.A. students there. "Firaq," he noted, "was a complex figure of libertinage who, in these conversations, sometimes called to mind sexual license with women even while standing as the classic figure of the exultant and unrepentant lover of young men" (2002, p. 151).

On 15 April 1949, in writing a letter to his lifelong friend and inconsistent beloved Saghar Nizami (1905–83), the Urdu poet Josh Malihabadi (1896–1982), who self-avowedly fell in love 18 times, twice with men, declared that he had "written a thousand times that I am dying to see you…Serious matters

over, let's indulge in some vulgarity" (quoted in Kidwai 2000, p. 279). He begins by wondering whether a female prostitute who would mount a man would be called a *gandu* (bugger), then refers to a Rampur poet Aslam Khan who "has a young poet staying with him. He has sent me an article in his praise for publication. The poor dove takes pains so that the crow gets to eat the eggs!" (quoted in Kidwai 2000, p. 279). It is in the middle of this playful mood, right after the reference to Khan's plan to get into the young poet's bed, that Josh refers to his friend Firaq Gorakhpuri of Allahabad—"Firaqwa is having a great time these days, and me, I'm starving" (ibid.). He follows that quickly with "I thought of you last night and an earthquake erupted in the crotch of my trousers" (ibid.).

In introducing Sahay, Merchant was building on this legend of Firaq and wrote that "it was an open secret that Firaq was a homosexual" (ibid.). He added though "[i]t was also a well-known fact that he never wrote a gay line" (ibid.). Here again, the fundamental criteria of what is gay writing and who can write it perform some acrobatics. A "gay line" does not automatically flow out of a homosexual. All the "personal knowledge and experience" (Radclyffe Hall's words) that comes with being a homosexual cannot be simply read back from the writings. While Hoshang sees homosexual to be a bodily condition, he does not see a "gay line" as implicit in this condition; the latter comes, rather, with adopting a particular political viewpoint and persona which Firaq never shared with Hoshang—that of sexual identity and coming out. Finally, with slim pickings to be made from the pool of gay writers, Hoshang gave up his search of the "gay poem" and translated one of Firaq's poems from the literary periodical *Sabras* as 'Public Meeting and Parting as Private Acts'. The poem is reminiscent both of the canonical Urdu love of male beauty and Hoshang's more contemporary ideas about male cruising in parks:

> Look at your face in the mirror, friend
> After our reunion it shines twice as bright

I am besotted with the scent of your words
His each word brings the scent of his lips
This isn't a public meeting since
My eyes are raised only to you
This coloured cloth hides a secret joy
There's current playing under the shroud of grass
Loving grudgingly is no love, friend
Go! Now you have no sorrow for me
Nevertheless my life is spent
Either remembering or forgetting you
Your tearful shadow is the sorrow of the age
Before my sight plays this shadow eternally
(quoted in Merchant 1999, p. 1).

LITERARY FAME AND 'GAY' WRITING AS A MARKETING GAMBLE

One, for India's first gay anthology, there were slim pickings… So I had to include stories by heterosexual men and women dealing with fictionalized or real gay characters. I also included a story satirizing heterosexuality from the gay perspective. But Penguin dropped it. About Makarand's [Paranjpe] *The Narrator*, a rival company published it and we could not afford the copyright royalties. There were other Penguin books, but the author was either Sri Lankan or had foreign publishers, which meant paying copyright fees in dollars and pounds. There were Indian gay authors published by Penguin and that would be a duplication of effort. By which I mean, who would read the entire novel if they get all the salacious bits in *Yaraana* for Rs 200? *These are commercial considerations beyond my control. Everywhere else, it's the marketing division and not the editorial division which calls the shots* (Merchant, in an interview with R. Raj Rao, 2009, emphasis mine)

The label 'gay' takes life in its many uses. It cannot be disconnected from these uses or considered unchangeable while its own uses alter. It is riveted to them and changes its significance and meaning in tandem with them. Within the enterprise of Hoshang editing a collection of gay writings from India, one of its major use had little to with the body of the writer

or of the editor, little to do with making an implicit connection between the act of contributing to the anthology and the "erotic awareness" of the contributor, little to do with being gay at all. It was about the practicality of being published where the category of gay writer was a route to getting there, and to getting there more frequently. It was about, somehow, gaining the difficult and elusive object, that of literary fame.

It had become amply clear within hours of talking with Hoshang that he, like many others of his writerly ilk, valued moments when his poetry had been publicly appreciated, when he had been listed with the major contemporary writers and poets of his city, nation or time. He had kept a minute record and photocopies of all the news clippings which had featured him. He savoured them and shared them with me. He recounted episodes when he had been invited by a university, by an academy or by friends for doing readings from his work. He clung to those moments and tried to extract as much substance from them. In arranging this tapestry of recognition and fame around him, Hoshang had inevitably given other writers and poets their places in it, often to his own discredit. He had a very self-conscious relationship with some of the other writers whose international reputation he thought he had not matched or could not hope to match. "I think just now," he told me, "my personality comes in the way of my writing but when I'm removed, when I'm gone, they'll settle, they'll see my writing, and appreciate it" (personal interview, July 2010). This feeling was both of resignation and love, of bitterness and self-mocking irony.

The Indian English writer Vikram Seth, he told me, had also first said no to being in his collection when he had requested him personally. Later, when the then Penguin associate editor and Hoshang's former student V. Karthika made the same request, he had agreed and given 31 stanzas from his verse novel *The Golden Gate*, the stanzas which follow through the relationship between his Californian characters Phil and Ed. Hoshang was miffed about

the fact that Seth had given him the "Christian atonement and guilt passages" from his novel rather than the "sexy squeals" that he had wanted (personal interview, July 2010). It mattered little, in Hoshang's nitpicking, that Seth's *Gate* barely had any sexy squeals to offer, always resigning into the narratorial 'Dear Reader' when the situation promised to lead to any casual sexual description.

With Shahid Ali too, Hoshang had a very self-conscious relationship over letters and the telephone. He never met him in person. Ali, he told me, used to reply to his enthusiastic and excited poems, translations and criticisms with a calm prose, never rude but always functional and without any further leads or questions. "It was the lack of intimacy," Hoshang wrote in one of his essays, "which hurt me in Ali's letters and phone calls...over a seven-year period" (2007, p. 467). "I was a sulker," Hoshang said, "but Shahid was never that", he was "very urbane" and "hard to ruffle". There was an impenetrability about him that Hoshang could never break through and that impenetrability had a lot to do with Ali being increasingly acknowledged and lauded, certainly by the early 1990s, as a significant poet in the United States and in Kashmir and India. Hoshang was conscious of the fact that he was talking to a 'greater' writer who could choose or refuse to be in his anthology.

It is in this light, in this web of relationships between editors and their writers, that we can see another dimension of the category of gay writing. This is its role as a publishing phenomenon, as a mobiliser of a niche market, as a creator of an audience for one's work. After a point in the interview, being uneasy with his own platitudes about who can and who cannot write for a gay anthology and impatient with my questions, Hoshang had given me one short stare and said, as if he was now telling me the real thing, "...see baba, there is always a plethora of things around, so you have to mark territories, actually, I don't care much for the category itself...it is because I get publicity as

a gay writer that I become, once in a while, a *chakki* [eunuch; claps his hands]" (personal interview, July 2010). Gay is less of a bodily category here and more of a commercial one. It is a way of making writing marketable.

In March 2007, a young British writer Will Davis published his first novel *My Side of the Story* about a 16-year-old boy Jarold, "a gay main character" in Davis's own words (2007). In an interview after the publication of the book, the then 27-year-old author was asked whether he considered himself to be "a gay writer". He thought about the question for a little while and he responded, he later admitted, with "the usual crap" (ibid.). "I answered along the lines of 'I don't want to be pigeonholed...my book isn't geared towards any specific readership...I hope it has something to offer everyone.'" But soon after beginning to have an idea about the trade of book publishing, a few months into his first novel, Davis wrote the article in *The Guardian* to recant on his former equivocalness about being a "gay writer". He turned coats with a rationale that it was not about him per se, or even the character in his novel, but about the contingency of book sales and of speedily acquiring a name in the business of writing.

He offered an economic explanation, not an expressive one or a body-centred one, of gay writing. He approached the same category from a different entry-point altogether. Now that he had his "one eye perpetually trained on book sales" and given his "precarious position as a first time author", the last thing he wanted to do, he said, was to "rock his boat by discouraging potential readers."

> my position probably ought to reflect the places my book has so far got the most reception: it is the gay-oriented magazines and papers that have shown the greatest interest in it. And since it is notoriously difficult for new novelists to get reviews and attention, if for no better reason, I think I'm going to define myself out of gratitude. So do I be a gay writer? Hell, yes (2007).

Hoshang has many uses for the badge of a gay writer and one of its primary uses is in the context of gay writing as a publication venture. Gay is unhooked here from the body of the writer and is grafted primarily on his prospects in the publishing market. From being seen mainly as a personal condition, it becomes more decidedly a commercially exigent badge. This is in response to the changes in the book publishing and marketing trade. Ever since the late 20th century, particularly from the 1980s onwards in Europe and America, there has been a sizeable amount of writings that have been published under the aegis of 'gay publishing houses' and have been slotted in bookshops under separate shelves producing their own niche sales. Even as far back as the 1940s, C.V. Terry, in reviewing Gore Vidal's *The City and the Pillar*, the story of the handsome Virginia boy Jim Willard, for *The New York Times*, had already clubbed together books 'about' homosexuals and seen them as a cohesive marketable (or unmarketable) thing, as forming a "shelf" unto its own—"[p]resented as the case history of a standard homosexual," he wrote for Vidal's book, "this novel adds little that is new to a groaning shelf" (1948). Gay writing and gay publishing had responded to the urgent need, felt acutely in the 1980s and the 1990s and propelled by gay and lesbian activism, to tell more and more coming out stories and gear them towards the specialised audience whose lives it would hope to reflect or to whom it would speak urgently. During these decades, gay writing as an advertising tool was doing something unique—it was bringing together and concretising, sometimes out of thin air, a sense of a gay audience as an independent buying and reading entity. In doing this, it was often using the larger cultural currency of the gay community to instill a sense of participation. "What do advertisers buy with their advertising expenditures?" Dallas W. Smythe had asked, in the beginning of the 1980s, in his watershed essay on the relationship between advertising and audiences in the American markets. "[W]hat they buy," he argued,

...are the services of audiences with predictable specifications which will pay attention in predictable numbers and at particular times to particular means of communication (television, radio, newspapers, magazines, billboards, and third-class mail) in particular market areas. As collectivities, these audiences are commodities (1981, p. 27).

Davis and Hoshang, in the situations mentioned here, are trying to latch on to this gay audience which the marketing offices of gay publication houses, in particular, are also in the process of producing. Audiences, if they have to be profitable, Smythe had observed from his 1970s archives of television viewership records in the United States and Canada, are never to be treated as an unspecialised whole. "The audience commodities," he argued, "bear specifications known in the business as 'the demographics'" (ibid.). These demographics are always specialised. Television producers in the in the 1970s in the United States and Canada used to divide their "total viewers" into "adults", "children", "teenagers", "men", "women" et al. In more recent times these demographics, the "statistical abstractions" (ibid, p. 49) necessary for the television business, have only multiplied in North America, as elsewhere, to include gay and lesbian, ethnic minorities and other specialised niches. Hoshang was spouting precisely this market speak when he told me that "there is always a plethora of things around, so you have to mark territories" (he had concluded one of his essays on Ali with "[a] minority identity...is a creation of culture, rather than a material fact in the real world" [2007, p. 469]). 'Gay' for him becomes the provisional mode through which to integrate his book into the market sales patterns where, as Bill Livant put it, "[v]irtually everyone is organized into the complex tapestry of...audiences" (quoted in Merchant 2007). Gay here is no different from kids, adults or crime that ritually mark the shelving patterns in a bookstore. Different stocking patterns in a bookstore create different sets of demands among the readers and by catering in terms of these groups, they also instigate a sense in the audience of briefly participating, of briefly

being attached to these groups. Terms have different implication patterns in different contexts, what they imply varies with their settings. Gay here is a market shorthand and this implication, as a tool meant for the convenience of product selection, takes precedence over the term's other implications or, at the very least, messes the sequence of its meanings. One chooses to call oneself a gay writer depending not so much on who one sleeps with, but instead also on what sales the category is likely to trigger.

This convenient doubleness inherent in the category of gay writing also means that it has an uncertain lease of life as a practical label. For audience categories are not unchangeable. They respond to market forces and alter in consonance with them. "For one thing," Livant noted about audience demographics, "the production, destruction, division and recombination of audiences is a vast and turbulent motion" (quoted in Merchant 2007). They are liable to become less or more effective over time.

Already by the early years of the 21st century, the excitement related to gay publishing was showing signs of dampening in Europe and America. Michael Denneny, senior editor at St. Martin's Press, one of the United States' largest publishers, spoke to Martin Arnold about the "quiet phase" in gay and lesbian book publishing. This phase, he said, is "a puzzle to me…[w]hether it's that people who were active for 20 years are getting out of publishing and the gay movement, or whether the genre has become integrated, or something else is happening—I don't know…What I do know is that the gay movement and gay publishing seems to be between times" (quoted in Arnold 2001).

Arnold, trying to make sense of this transition phase, noted that there are not as many coming out or self-realisation stories produced by gay publishers now. That form of writing seems to have lived its life as the gay movement reaps more successes and makes more political and social inroads in western European countries and America. The palette of gay writing has expanded so far as to threaten the umbrella term itself. "As the themes become

more universal," he pointed out, "the possibility of crossover sales is greater and gay writers and their publishers not only want their writing to be displayed in bookstores' gay and lesbian sections but also on the A to Z shelves" (ibid.). The niche gay and lesbian bookshop Gay's the Word in central London, for the last 10 to 15 years, has been repeatedly making claims of declining sales and just about managing to stay afloat.

In India, the commercially viable period for specifically gay and lesbian publications was discovered in the late-1990s by Penguin when it produced the first collections of gay and lesbian writings in 1999. Talking of the moment when his co-edited volume *Same-Sex Love* was published in 2000 in India, Saleem Kidwai told Gautam Bhan that he realises "in retrospect that we were then on the verge of a new phase of gay writing." "Before us," he said, "there were only two serious books—by Rakesh Ratti and Giti Thadani. Ratti's book—*A Lotus of Another Colour*—sort of hung in the air. There was simply no history or community for it to stand on. Ashwini Sukhthankar's *Facing the* Mirror… came a year after ours. Each book has built a readership and a community since then (quoted in Bhan 2007, p. 53). The end of the 2000s has seen the setting up of India's first online LGBT bookstore called Queer Ink under the ownership of Shobhna S. Kumar who lives in Mumbai. About the same time, Mumbai also saw the opening of India's First LGBT Pride Store, Azaad Bazaar (Free Market). Different books, released in India since the early 2000s, have used the marketing pitch of gay or lesbian writing. In the same interview, Kidwai notices a change from the moment of publication of his own co-edited book to the mid–late 2000s, "*Same-Sex Love*," he said, "was published through the back door by Macmillan India who publish textbooks because no mainstream publisher would publish us. They did nothing to distribute it or promote it. It was bookstores," he pointed out, "who would harass them because people were asking. And this was after we had been published abroad with good reviews and no controversy. Today

the book is in demand and is going to be reissued by Penguin" (ibid., pp. 54–55). Bhan questions the co-editors further. What I find particularly interesting is the remoulding manoeuvre that the co-editors Kidwai and Vanita do with Bhan's questions. Issues of social acceptance, of what will be approved are rearranged more as issues of marketability, of what will sell:

> GB: But do you think there still remains a difference when it comes from a major publishing house? We know that bookstores are still hesistant to take books that are open about sexuality when they don't come under big publishing brands. For example, with *Because I Have a Voice*, we found that bookstores were happy to carry it once the *Hindustan Times* and *Times of India* had carried reviews. These reviews gave the book legitimacy. Do you think we should take this seriously as one of the reasons why we in India don't have more people [this was 2007]—gay or straight—writing about sexuality, and especially writing popular fiction?
>
> RV: *I don't think that's a barrier. I think the bookstores are willing to carry any book that they think will sell.*
>
> SK: Books always appear in stages. *People will store books that will sell.* I'm closely associated with a bookstore in a small town. I know that the only copies left of *Same-Sex Love in India* are now with that small town bookstore because it's out of print, and that's where people order it from now, at a higher price. It's interesting, the book is selling more now that it was in the middle period—something which is indicative of a change. I think the life of a book cannot be judged within a year or two of its birth.
>
> GB: *So you don't think there is a hesitancy on the part of bookstores in keeping books on homosexuality?*
>
> SK: *I don't think there is a bias.*
>
> RV: *They'll look at the cover, the title, what is marketable. It's about what they think will sell* (Bhan 2007, p. 55, emphasis mine)

This later moment is marked by the market trend in India that is palatable to the category of gay writing, one in which

it is seen as a viable product. Yet reviewers, and writers, have begun to simultaneously point out why gay writing might be holding back writers from crossing-over into greater literary acclaim and sales. Reviewing the Indian-American writer Rahul Mehta's collection of short stories *Quarantine* (2010), for *Business Standard*, Nilanjana S. Roy noted that "[i]t would be unfair to stereotype *Quarantine* as just a collection of 'gay writings', any more than John Updike's short stories are just a collection of writings about hetero relationships" (2010). The category of gay writing remains contested, constantly buffeted in the ebb and flow of the motivations of publishers and authors, sales and fame, reviewers and readers.

These marketing trends indicate the mutability of the categories of gay and lesbian writing and irreversibly prove that there are several routes through which the writer can be linked to what she produces and that there is nothing given or implicit about this connection. Sexuality-specific writing will continue to remain in circulation, based less on what sexual orientation the writer says she has or what sexual orientation the characters in the book have, but instead on how much sales the generic label will be able to trigger. This kind of flexibility in the terms lesbian or gay will see them through their lease of popular use in different regions and markets, till whenever this popularity can last.

6

Doubleness as Politics

Final Remarks

The doubleness of sexuality informs the political project around sexuality. To be political is to necessarily transact in this doubleness. It is to realise that expressions make sense in their contexts and are liable to revisions, even reversals if these contexts shift. Being political is keeping track of this doubleness, and out of its messiness to come up with temporarily articulate forms that serve their time and use, that are articulated precisely because of their time and use. Always wedged between an ideal mandate and a less-than-ideal reality, to be political is to constantly try to bridge this divide. It is to keep working out how the on-the-ground situation can be approximated to its theoretical ideals. It is also to celebrate when. within the exhausting terrain of the political, such moments of embrace between the theoretical and the practical emerge, even if these are fleeting.

With a decade-and-a-half of the 21st century behind us, I have seen a particularly exemplary case of such doubleness of sexuality as it emerged in the 'queer politics' in Delhi. I saw it on intimate grounds, participating in it through some of my

closest friendships, learning from these friends both as a political apprentice and as a member of an unusual kind of joint queer family. It was this moment that I spent working with the queer collective called Nigah (perspective or gaze in Urdu) that I mentioned in the beginning of this book. It was based in Delhi and at any given moment in the three to four years that I remained active within it, it had eight to ten members, sometimes more, at others less. This collective, which was a close-knit network of friends both like-minded and crazily argumentative, organised a variety of events like film screenings, demonstrations and college workshops in order to, as we claimed on our web space, create "safe spaces" for queer people to express themselves and its unhindered sustenance in Delhi, to "reclaim" a city which was special to each one of us in many ways. Most of us were then between 20 and 35 years of age. Towards the end of my bachelors programme in literature at Hindu College in the University of Delhi, and when I started my masters programme in the same subject across the road at St Stephens, I was introduced to and then immersed myself in the many political activities of Nigah. When I write this story in retrospect—and this too must be a form of doubleness, to live something first and then to create a narrative out of it later, try to understand it in other terms—I see a form of doubleness so implicit in the way that this group worked that it was more like habit, which sometimes was consciously realised as political strategy.

Most of the members were fluent in English (all spoke more than just English) and were aware, more or less, of the political models at hand to practice the kind of 'sexuality politics' they intended. It was here that I first learned a basic form of doubleness, then with a sense of discovery only recent graduates are capable of—between the concept of 'queer' and of 'LGBT'. Two words, two strategies that always went along within the group, one never losing out to the other but always inflecting each other. One of the members of Nigah, Gautam Bhan and his

friend Arvind Narrain, had been the editors of *Because I Have a Voice* which was the subject of discussion in Chapter 4 of this book. It had come out in 2005 from a small independent and growing press, Yoda. Gautam and Arvind, in their mid-20s then and recent graduates from the US and India, were, like several of their friends, fellow activists and mentors, doing something very peculiar. They were reinventing the 15–20-year-long wave of sexuality activism in Delhi and Bangalore predominantly from within the lens of queer politics, a form that had seen its acme in several transnational academic and activist spaces in the 1990s, which both the editors and some of their mentors in these cities were deeply familiar with and something that they had participated in shaping.

This doubleness between the usage of 'queer' and 'LGBT' took several forms. Whereas the collective, in its group statements and its event invites, did not desist from using terms of sexual identity like lesbian, gay and bisexual—using them frequently, with pride, with utter obviousness—it always, sometimes smartly, sometimes clumsily, mentioned that it understood these identities in a particularly 'queer' way. The doubleness was in the way they constantly and often confusingly circulated both LGBT and queer tags, never quite managing to separate them in practice. In doing this, they understood LGBTHIK... as a provisional space of identities rather than a compartment unto each, a space marked by many different experiences but always having something in common. Queer was the name Nigah members gave to this space, something that they thought held those identities together and reinterpreted each of them in its light. Queer was a vacant frame that mobilised a perspective, a way of seeing things, *nigah*. Rhetorically speaking, it was made up of those identities that were at odds with what the group constantly spoke of as social and cultural norms. Using the word 'queer', the group wanted to project a radical imagination whereby LGBT would be internally differentiated and opened up, where lesbian and gay identities

could inhabit the same political space of resistance as Hijras or trans* folks, as single women, as Dalit activists, or as labour unions. Within the definition of queer, all of these folks were, in some way or the other, at odds with their living environments and collided with it on an everyday basis, some definitely more than others at different times.

This doubleness in practice where LGBT and queer were constantly counterweighed with each other produced a particular political rhetoric. Whereas LGBT was often seen as including within it a series of individual types, types which became proud rallying points for community-making and freedom, queer was a political standpoint, staged as a reaching out and an alliance-making to realise those freedoms in the widest sense of the term. This rhetoric was, in those years, certainly less than successful in practice, especially in the inability of the group to seriously take up the issues of caste politics or class-based access. In those years, the group did not choose to focus on caste specifically in most of the queer work it did in Delhi. Hence, this vision of queer was realised at best to a partial extent.

It was only in the later years of its existence that we at Nigah collectively made more efforts to translate all the public material into Hindi, moved into new more accessible public spaces for organising events, and took up issues which were outside the earlier mandates. Some events, like some members, always tended towards the 'LGBT' form of politics geared towards coming out and complete visibility, while others tried to expand this template or unearth its more expansive potential. The 'queerwallahs' had sometimes furious, sometimes friendly debates with the 'LGBTwallah' friends. Theoretically speaking, queer brings us together based on what we believe whereas LGBT is hedged on a community based on who we are. Over the years, Nigah became a site for a constant conversation between these two ideas and between their practitioners.

Queer, with its emphasis on finding similarities of

marginalisation with other social groups, at least rhetorically mobilises a form of politics that reinvents LGBT. It filters LGBT less as types of specific embodied conditions and uses it—still as the same word LGBT—more as a political viewpoint from where the world looks a little different, where the LGBT movement itself looks more than a single-issue movement. LGBT, inflected thus by queer, tries to operate on a bigger template of alliances and speak of subjects that it thought the LGBT frame did not allow. It was, at least notionally and in Delhi, making the LGBT movement willing to take on board questions that, at first glance, did not seem directly relevant' to the mandate of its activism. This doubleness, lived out in the constant and simultaneous usage of LGBT and queer, became especially relevant, for instance, when the group discussed whether it should sign on petitions that asked for an international probe into human rights violations committed by the Sri Lankan government authorities in its offensive against the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) and its own civilians. In doing this, it had to then ask itself: when is it that, as activists say, we really *do* sexuality? What does this *doing 'sexuality' activism* look like? Is an association with forums that are critical of corporate-friendly development, with anti-caste movements or the mass-based movement for the Bhopal gas disaster victims also *doing* sexuality activism in some sense, even if it looks like moving out of the given script to some? Is it revising this script? By wanting to make such alliances, does it become a way to bring sexuality—which has a history in India of being considered a less serious issue than other more pressing ones—on to the agendas of other social and political movements? It was the doubleness in the usage of political terms such as queer and LGBT that allowed Nigah then to have these conversations and to keep churning its political outlook as it went along. That was the way many of its members, themselves associated intimately with other movements, grew up and learned, changed

their strategies, remained in or left the group. That was the way they lived out the connections that queer/LGBT activism is bound to have with the world around it.

This book has spoken of doubleness inherent in the way words are used strategically in court-rooms, in street protests, at homes and in personal stories. It has observed that we articulate words—gay, lesbian, trans* or queer—to mean specific things in specific situations, for them to do specific political work, and that these words might sometimes get out of hand, stop doing that work which is when we need to reinvigorate them. That words do not have inner cores but instead have diverse deployments, they have political implications and that they can be as dynamic as they can tend to fatigue, that there is nothing of an essential truth within them outside these many deployments. This book has travelled through several worlds, some passing, some persistent, but its main crux is of this everpresent doubleness of sexuality informing the ways people live out their sexuality or politically organise around it. If it were not for this doubleness of sexuality, if sexual identity would always mean and do the same things, it would have been a far more congealed movement and narrower human actors we would be dealing with. If we cease to read doubleness in words and concepts, when it actually leaps out at us most of the time, then these words and concepts would increasingly mean the same thing, they—gay, lesbian, trans* or queer—would harden if we desert their implicit potential of being deployed in many ways. The idea of doubleness should persuade us to keep words alive and make them do important work. Additionally, as the book has noted, there is a remarkable multiplicity of idioms of same-sex desire in India and sexuality activists and literary editors continue to respond to this multiplicity, sometimes knowingly, sometimes unknowingly, in many exciting and always complicated ways, even as they mount their political conversations and literary enterprise around sexuality, community and desire.

I end with an example from Britain where most of this book was written. Near the end of the 200s, under the Tory–Liberal Democrat coalition government, Brenda Namigadde, a Ugandan asylum seeker, had had her application rejected by the first-tier tribunal immigration judge. Brenda had claimed that she was lesbian and that she had escaped from Uganda because she feared that there was a distinct danger to her life in her own country because of her sexual preference. Matthew Coats, head of immigration at the UK Border Agency, explained the reason for the rejection of her asylum application: "Ms Namigadde's case has been carefully considered by both the UK Border Agency and the courts on two separate occasions and she has been found not to have a right to remain here" (Coats 2011). He added that "[a]n immigration judge found on the *evidence* before him that Ms Namigadde was not homosexual" (ibid., emphasis mine). It is this evidence—the judge finds ways to prove a 'homosexual'—that is the biggest proof why we should continue using words in as many ways as possible and not let them crust around one meaning or lifestyle. The judge seemed to think of lesbian only within some imagined rituals of consumption in some recognisably lesbian spaces, whether nightclubs, bookshops, sex-shops or Pride marches. He could not imagine lesbianness as existing outside these spaces. The immigration judge made this lesbian-as-specific-lifestyle conceit his main evidence to judge Namigadde's claim about her sexuality. He saw homosexuality proved only through some preset protocols. "I find," he wrote,

> ...that the Appellant was not and is not, on the evidence before me, a lesbian. I end that her credibility is affected by her conduct. I am not obliged to accept her say...I find such peripheral information to describe what went on, either in Uganda or in the United Kingdom, very generalised and quite simply lacking in the kind of detail and information of *someone genuinely living that lifestyle*. The Appellant claims to have freedom to live a life unconstrained and without prejudice. I find the information as to how she has done so over

the lengthy period she has been in the United Kingdom singularly lacking in detail or coherence. The Appellant appears to have taken no interest in forms of media by magazines, books or other information relating to her sexual orientation. Whilst there is no requirement to do so it does seem strange, if she is exercising the real sense of freedom she claims, that she does not do so (quoted in *WGLB*, Jan 2011, emphasis mine)

The "real sense of freedom" has to be plucked out whenever it threatens to entrench itself in *some* magazines, in *some* "details", in *some* genuine "lifestyle". The "freedom to live a life unconstrained and without prejudice" is also to have the freedom to script one's own desires and the ways we put them to practice, the names we might or might not give them and the different families we create for ourselves outside any propaganda that tells us what ideal gay families or real lesbian individuals should look like.[1] Freedom has always been a learning and an unlearning, from the LGBT scene, from the movement politics and its internal divisions, from the market. It is to realise and work with the difference—of desires, names and places—but never to impose a necessary difference even if the script—of the market, of the NGOs, of funding bodies—demands it. Freedom, and sexual freedom in particular, has to be married with other freedoms that have at times been mistaken thought to be its 'outside'—that of larger anti-caste, anti-patriarchy and anti-corporatised growth movements. This will be done as can be seen in many instances without moving outside the sexuality

[1] Rajiv Bera, who works on the issues of asylum and sexuality in the UK, told me that asylum applicants in the UK who apply using the basis of persecution of homosexuality in their home countries sometimes duplicate the specific format and content of previously successful applications to strengthen their own chance of success in what is an increasingly immigration-unfriendly country. This is another evidence of the necessarily complex relationships people have with law, and of the necessary distance they have with their own strategic self-representations to it (personal communication, July 2011).

mandate, and foremost, equipped with the perspective that sees them as nothing but together, as nothing but symbiotic. This is how freedom will have to be worked out in detail. For we know, it is only when "the real sense of freedom" is framed this way, only when we see it reflected in the freedom of others that we will be able to account our freedom as complete.

Glossary

aadat (Hindi/Urdu)	habit
ayyash (Hindi/Urdu)	hedonist
baazi (Hindi/Urdu)	excessive habit (usually used as suffix to the object of habit, such as in *bahasbaazi)*
bahas (Hindi/Urdu)	debate
bahasbaazi (Hindi/Urdu)	fervent habit for debate (*bahas*)
bhaav (Hindi)	sensibility
bhang (Hindi/Urdu)	hemp drink
chhakka (Hindi/Urdu)	literally a sixer, used to refer crudely to Hijras or to deride male effeminacy
chaal (Hindi/Urdu)	ploy or a move in the game
chaalbaaz (Hindi/Urdu)	the trickster or the cunning one
dargah (Hindi/Urdu)	Sufi shrine
dehaati (Hindi)	rustic
dil (Hindi/Urdu)	heart
dilchasp (Hindi/Urdu)	interesting, that which absorbs the heart

dost (Hindi/Urdu)	friend
dosti (Hindi/Urdu)	friendship
fatkal (Marathi)	word to describe demeanour, which implies someone without control or composure
gaandu (Hindi/Urdu)	common invective for the one who gets fucked, used generally to ridicule male effeminacy
gaand (Hindi/Urdu)	crude word for arse
girvi (Hindi/Urdu)	pledged or mortgaged
humsafar (Hindi/Urdu)	literally the one who will journey with you, life companion
ishq,pyaar (Hindi/Urdu)	love
jumlabazi (Hindi/Urdu)	an indulgence with phrases, *jumla* is Hindi/Urdu for 'phrase' or 'sentence'
kaamna (Hindi)	aspiration, desire
kaifiyat (Hindi/Urdu)	explanation, description
kala (Hindi)	art or even skill
kaatil (Hindi/Urdu)	murderer
khel (Hindi/Urdu)	game, play
kothi(Hindi)	feminised males
lat (Hindi/Urdu)	more a social idiom of excessive habit, a sort of addiction that is not yet medicalisable
laundebaazi (Hindi/Urdu)	an excessive habit, love and desire for boys
launda naach (Hindi/Urdu)	boy dance
leela (Hindi)	play
maitri-karaar (Hindi)	literally, friendship contract, similar in form to a marital pact between the same sex

marz (Hindi/Urdu)	illness
mast (Hindi/Urdu)	playful, intoxicated
masti (Hindi/Urdu)	fun, play
maza (Hindi/Urdu)	enjoyment
mehboob (Hindi/Urdu)	beloved
meyeli chhele (Bengali)	girlish boy
mitr (Hindi)	friend
moda (Hindi/Urdu)	cane stool
mubahisa (Urdu)	debate
munhfat (Hindi/Urdu)	someone who speaks rather freely
nasha (Hindi/Urdu)	intoxication by alcohol or narcotics or both.
nigah (Hindi/Urdu)	perspective or gaze
panthi (Hindi)	understood to be the masculine partner who is 'active'
pasand (Hindi/Urdu)	favourites, likes
pyar-mohabbat (Hindi/Urdu)	love
randi (Hindi/Urdu)	more informal than 'prostitute' and cruder than 'slut'
riyasat (Hindi/Urdu)	estate, dominion
rujhaan (Hindi/Urdu)	implying inclination
saheli (Hindi/Urdu)	female friend
samyonik (Sanskrit)	*sam* is union, *yoni* is vagina
shahinashe (Hindi/Urdu)	royal habits
shatir (Hindi/Urdu)	chess player, generally implies 'the cunning one'
shauk (Hindi/Urdu)	interests, hobbies
shayar (Hindi/Urdu)	poet
tarraqqi (Hindi/Urdu)	progress

tondacha fatkal (Marathi)	someone who has a loose tongue; can also refer to *hathacha fatkal*, someone with a loose fist, given to beating people up
yaar (Hindi/Urdu)	male friend
yaraana (Hindi/Urdu)	word for friendship in general, and male friendship in particular
*zamindar*s (Hindi/Urdu)	landowners

Bibliography

Ackerley, J. 1983 (1932). *Hindoo Holiday: An Indian Journal*. Middlesex and New York: Penguin Books.

———. 1992 (1968). *My Father and Myself*. Pimlico: London.

Agamben, Giorgio. 2003. *The Coming Community*. London and Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Aids Bhedbhav Virodhi Andolan (ABVA). 1991 (November–December). *Less Than Gay: A Citizens' Report on the Status of Homosexuality in India*. New Delhi. Accessed at the South Asia Citizens Web Rare Documents Archive, http://www.sacw.net/article10497.html, accessed in January 2016.

Aldrich, Robert. 2008. *Colonialism and Homosexuality*. London: Routledge.

Ali, Agha Shahid. 2009. 'Not All, Only a Few Return', *The Veiled Suite: The Collected Poems*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, p. 349.

Althusser, L. 1971(1970). *Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses: Notes towards an Investigation*. Translated from French by Ben Brewster, accessed at http://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/althusser/1970/ideology.htm#n22, source text 'Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays', *Monthly Review Press*, accessed on 23 June 2011.

Amarkant. 2004(1959). *Sukha Patta*. New Delhi: Rajkamal Paperbacks.

Anonymous. 'Sajan chale sasural', in *Peperonity*, http://peperonity.com/go/sites/mview/hindi.gay.stories1/15108816;jsessionid=546

DBECA276F34F44F3FB8702656F172.c07?act=2883-8299832-1304082852_2c07, accessed on 1 April 2011.

Arasu, Ponni. 2011 (25 March). 'The Nigah Media Collective: A Perspective on Social Change', (speech c. 2005), shared on personal email.

Arnold, David and Stuart Blackburn (eds). 2004. *Telling Lives in India: Biography, Autobiography, and Life-History*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Arnold, Martin. 2001 (May). 'Making Books: Transition Time for Gay Works', *The New York Times*, http://www.nytimes.com/2001/05/10/books/making-books-transition-time-for-gay-works.html

Arondekar, Anjali. 2009. *For the Record: On Sexuality and the Colonial Archive in India*. Durham and London: Duke University Press.

Bacchetta, Paola. 2002. 'Rescaling Transnational "Queerdom": Lesbian and "Lesbian" Identitary-Positionalities in Delhi in the 1980s', *Antipode*, Vol. 34, No. 5, November, pp. 947–73.

Bahal, Aniruddha. 1997. 'Murder At La Martiniere', *Outlook India*, 26 March, http://www.outlookindia.com/article.aspx?203268, accessed on 15 August 2010

Bajaj, Vikas. 2007 (11 February). 'In India, the Golden Age of Television Is Now', *The New York Times*.

Barthes, Roland. 1990. *A Lover's Discourse: Fragments*. Harmondsworth: Penguin Books.

Beverley, John. 1989. 'The Margin at the Centre: On Testimonio (Testimonial Narrative)', *Modern Fiction Studies*, Vol. 35, No. 1, Spring, pp. 11–28.

Bhan, Gautam. 2008. 'Pride, Prejudice and Politics', http://www.indianexpress.com/news/pride-prejudice-and-politics/328589/0, accessed on 31 January 2009.

———. 2007. 'Ruth Vanita and Saleem Kidwai in Conversation', *Wasafiri*, Vol. 22, No. 1, March, pp. 52–56.

Bhawuk, Manoj. 2009 (6 July). '*Ee Aaj ki demand bar aura na bujhaai*', http://www.bbc.co.uk/blogs/hindi/2009/07/post-8.html, accessed on 1 January 2011.

Bloch, Iwan. 1938 (2006). *The Sexual Life of Our Time: In Its Relations to Modern Civilization*. London: Rebman.

Bristow, Joseph. 2007. *Sexuality*. London: Routledge.

Brown, Wendy. 1997. 'The Impossibility of Women's Studies', *Differences: A Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies*, Vol. 9, No. 3, pp. 79–101.

Bryson, John R. and Philippa A. Lowe. 2002. 'Story-telling and History Construction: Rereading George Cadbury's Bournville Model Village', *Journal of Historical Geography*, Vol. 28, No. 1, January, pp. 21–41.

Bulletin for International Psychoanalytic Association. 1927. 'The Indian Psycho-Analytical Society', Vol. 8, pp. 307–08.

Calvin, John. 1536. *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, translated by Henry Beveridge. http://www.reformed.org/master/index.html?mainframe=/books/institutes/, accessed on 12 December 2009.

Cavafy, Constantine P. 1992. 'Hidden Things', in George Savidis (ed.), *Collected Poems*, translated by Edmund Keeley and Philip Sherrard. New Jersey: Princeton University Press, p. 195.

Chhabra, Aseem. 2010 (29 November). 'Gay, Colourful and Proud on Delhi's Streets', http://www.rediff.com/news/slide-show/slide-show-1-gay-and-proud-on-delhis-streets/20101129.htm, accessed on 20 February 2011.

Chandran, Vinay and Arvind Narrain. 2005. 'It's not my job to tell you that it's okay to be gay—Medicalization of Homosexuality: A Queer Critique', in Arvind Narrain and Gautam Bhan (eds), *Because I Have a Voice: Queer Politics in India*. New Delhi: Yoda Press, pp. 49–69.

Chatterjee, Partha. 2004. *The Politics of the Governed: Reflections on Popular Politics in Most of the World*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Chevers, Norman. 1870 (1856). *A Manual for Medical Jurisprudence for India: Including the Outline of a History of Crime Against the Person in India*. Calcutta: Thacker, Spink & Co, Publishers to the University.

Chughtai, Ismat. 1998 (2007). *Kagazi Hai Pairhan*, translated from Urdu to Hindi. New Delhi: Rajkamal Paperbacks.

Cixous, Helene. 1976. 'The Laugh of the Medusa', *Signs*, Vol. 1, No. 4, Summer, pp. 875–93. Translated by Keith Cohen and Paula Cohen.

Coat, Matthew. 2011 (28 January). Quoted, '"Gay" Ugandan Brenda Namigadde fears deportation death', http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-12306975, accessed on 5 February 2011.

Cohen, Lawrence. 1995. 'Holi in Banaras and the Mahaland of

Modernity', *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies*, Vol. 2, No. 4, pp. 399–424.

———. 2002. 'What Mrs. Besahara Saw: Reflections on the Gay Goonda', in Ruth Vanita (ed.), *Queering India: Same-Sex Love and Eroticism in Indian Culture and Society*. New York and London: Routledge, pp. 149–60.

———. 2005. 'The Kothi Wars: AIDS Cosmopolitanism and the Morality of Classification', in Vincanne Adams and Stacy Leigh Pigg (eds), *Sex in Development: Science, Sexuality, and Morality in Global Perspective*. Durham: Duke University Press, pp. 269–304.

Dasgupta, Rana. 2009. 'Capital Gains: A Report on Delhi's New Super-Rich', *Granta*, Issue 107, Summer. http://www.granta.com/Magazine/107/Capital-Gains/1, accessed on 5 December 2010.

Dave, Naisargi. 2006. 'Between Queer Ethics and Sexual Morality: Lesbian and Gay Activism in New Delhi', thesis submitted to University of Michigan, draft shared on email.

———. 2012. *Queer Activism in India: A Story in the Anthropology of Ethics*. Durham and London: Duke University Press.

Davis, Will. 2007. 'Am I a gay writer?', *The Guardian*, July, http://www.guardian.co.uk/books/booksblog/2007/jul/03/amiagaywriter, accessed on 24 December 2010.

D'Cruz, Ivan A. and Robert A. Miller. 1964. 'Norman Chevers: A Description of Congenital Absence of Pulmonary Valves and Supravalvular Aortic Stenosis in the Eighteen-Forties', *Brit. Heart J.*, Vol. 26, pp. 723–25.

de Certeau, Michel. 1984. *The Practice of Everyday Life*. Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press.

Delany, Samuel R. 1988. *The Motion of Light in Water: Sex and Science Fiction Writing in the East Village*. New York: Arbor House.

Deleuze, Gilles. 1988. *Foucault*, translated by Sean Hand. London and Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Deleuze, Gilles and Felix Guattari. 1984. *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, translated by Robert Hurley, Seem Mark and Helen R. Lane. London: Athlone Press.

———. 1987 (1980). *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, translated by Brian Massumi. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press.

D' Emilio, John. 1983. 'Capitalism and Gay Identity,' in Ann Snitow, Christine Stansell and Sharan Thompson (eds), *Powers of Desire: The Politics of Sexuality*. New Feminist Library Series. New York: Monthly Review Press, pp. 100–13.

Derrida, Jacques. 1972. 'Positions', Interview by G. Scarpetta and J.L. Houdebine, *Diacritics*, Vol. 2, No. 4, Winter, pp. 35–43.

———. 2002. 'Des Tours de Babel', in Gil Anidjar (ed.), *Acts of Religion*. New York: Routledge, pp. 102–34.

Dhall, Pawan. 2005. 'Solitary Cruiser', in Arvind Narrain and Gautam Bhan (eds), *Because I Have a Voice: Queer Politics in India*. New Delhi: Yoda Press, pp. 115–22.

Dhalla, Ghalib Shiraz. 2002. *Ode to Lata*. Los Angeles: Really Great Books.

Doctor, Vikram. 2009 (28 June). 'A Matter of Pride: Swinging Sixties', *The Times of India*.

Dube, Siddhartha. 2015 (October), 'An Indefinite Sentence: Love, Homophobia and the AIDS Panic in 1980s India', *The Caravan: A Journal of Politics and Culture*, http://www.caravanmagazine.in/reportage/indefinite-sentence-homophobia-aids-panic-1980#sthash.QkR0cHfm.dpuf, accessed in October 2015.

Dutt, Barkha. 2011. '*We the People*—Being Gay: the Parents' Story', http://www.ndtv.com/video/player/we-the-people/being-gay-the-parents-story/196883, 17 April, accessed on 24 April 2011.

Dyer, Richard. 2003. *Now You See It*. London and New York: Routledge.

Ellis, Havelock, 1933 (1901), *Studies in the Psychology of Sex Volume II: Sexual Inversion*. Philadelphia: F.A. Davis Company Publishers.

Foucault, Michel. 1990 (1978). *The History of Sexuality*, translated by Robert Hurley. London: Penguin Books.

Fowles, John. 1966. *The Magus*. London: Vintage.

Freud, Sigmund. 1905a (1901). 'Fragment of an Analysis of a Case of Hysteria', in Angela Richards (ed.), *Case Histories I: 'Dora' and 'Little Hans'*, translated by Alix and James Strachey, 1925. Middlesex: Penguin Books, pp. 29–164.

———. 1905b (2000). *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality*, translated by James Strachey. New York: Basic Books

———. 1935 (1960). 'Letter to an American Mother', 9 April, translated by Tania and James Stern. New York: Basic Books, pp. 423–24.

Gadihoke, Sabeena. 2010. 'Selling Soap and Stardom: The Story of Lux', in *Tasveer Ghar: A Digital Archive of South Asian Popular Visual Culture*, http://www.tasveerghar.net/, accessed on 4 January 2011.

Gelder, Ken. 2005 (1997). 'Introduction: The Field of Subcultural Studies', in Ken Gelder and Sarah Thornton (eds), *The Subcultures Reader*. New York: Routledge, pp. 1–15.

Ghosh, Amitav. 2002. '"The Ghat of the Only World": Agha Shahid Ali in Brooklyn', *The Annual of Urdu Studies*, Vol. 17, pp. 1–19.

Ghosh, Shohini. 2002. 'Queer Pleasure for Queer People: Film, Television, and Queer Sexuality in India', in Ruth Vanita (ed.), *Queering India: Same Sex Love and Eroticism in Indian Culture and Society*. New York: Routledge.

Gibran, Kahlil. 2006 (1923), 'On Friendship' in *The Prophet*. Middlesex: The Echo Library, p. 26.

Giddens, Anthony. 1993. *The Transformation of Intimacy: Love, Sexuality and Eroticism in Modern Societies*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Ginsberg, Allen. 1997. 'Death and Fame', http://www.poemhunter.com/poem/death-amp-fame/, accessed on 31 January 2009.

Gupta, Alok. 2005. 'Englishpur ki Kothi: Class Dynamics in the Queer Movement in India', in Arvind Narrain and Gautam Bhan (eds), *Because I have a Voice: Queer Politics in India*. New Delhi: Yoda Press.

Gupta, Charu. 2001a, *Sexuality, Obscenity, Community: Women, Muslims, and the Hindu Public in Colonial India*. New Delhi: Permanent Black.

———. 2001b. 'The Icon of Mother in Late Colonial North India: "Bharat Mata", "Matri Bhasha" and "Gau-Mata"', *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 36, No. 45, November, pp. 4291–99.

Gupta, N. 1901. 'A National Literature for Hindustan', *Kayastha Samachar*, 4, July, pp. 25–26.

Habib, Shaista. 1995. 'I Cannot be Sublime', in Anisur Rahman (ed.), *Fire and the Rose: An Anthology of Modern Urdu Poetry*. New Delhi: Rupa & Co., pp. 326–29.

Hali, Altaf Hussain. 1977 (1893). *Muqaddamah se'r-o-sa'iri*, Wahid Quraishi (ed.), Aligarh.

Hall, Stuart. 1987. 'Minimal Selves', in *Identity: The Real Me*. London: ICA.

Hardt, Michel. 2007. 'About Love', lecture delivered at the European Graduate School, Switzerland, http://www.egs.edu/faculty/

michael-hardt/videos/michael-hardt-about-love-european-graduate-school-2007-2007/, accessed on 4 October 2009.

Hyam, Ronald. 1990. *Empire and Sexuality: The British Experience.* Manchester: Manchester University Press.

Jackson, Peter A. 2009. 'Capitalism and Global Queering: National Markets, Parallels Among Sexual Cultures, and Multiple Queer Modernities', *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies*, Vol. 15, No. 3, pp. 357–95.

Jain, Manoj. 2009 (July). 'Baba Ramdev Can Cure The Disease Caused By Homosexuality Through Yoga', http://yoga.am/2009/07/14/baba-ramdev-can-cure-the-disease-caused-by-homosexuality-through-yoga/, accessed on 17 January 2011.

John, Barry. 1988 (31 July). 'The Love that Dare not Speak its Name', *Sunday*. Quoted in 'A tag like any other', in Aids Bhedbhav Virodhi Andolan (ABVA), November–December 1991, *Less Than Gay: A Citizens' Report on the Status of Homosexuality in India*, pp. 7–8.

Kamleshwar. 1979 (1956). *Ek Sadak Sattavan Galiyan* [One Road, Fifty-Seven Lanes]. Delhi: Rajpal and Sons.

Katz, Jonathan. 1976. *Gay American History: Lesbians and Gay Men in the U.S.A.* New York: Crowell.

———. 1990. 'The Invention of Heterosexuality', *Socialist Review*, Vol. 20, No. 1, February, pp. 7–34.

Kaviraj, Sudipta. 2006. 'Tagore and Transformations in the Ideals of Love', in Francesca Orsini (ed.), *Love in South Asia.* New York: Cambridge University Press, pp. 161–82.

———. 2012. *The Trajectories of the Indian State: Politics and Ideas.* Hyderabad: Orient Blackswan.

Khan, Danish. 2010 (March). 'Homosexuality, AMU and Chughtai', *The World of Urdu.* http://urdufigures.blogspot.com/2010/03/homosexuality-amu-and-chughtai.html, accessed on 25 January 2011.

Khan, Shivananda. 2007. 'Foreword', in Vidya Shah and Aditya Bondyopadhyay (eds), *My Body is Not Mine: Stories of Violence and Tales of Hope: Voices from the Kothi Community in India.* New Delhi: Naz Foundation International and Centre for Media and Alternative Communication.

khanna, akshay. 2005. 'Beyond Sexuality (?)', in Arvind Narrain and Gautam Bhan (eds), *Because I Have a Voice: Queer Politics in India*. New Delhi: Yoda Press, pp. 89–103.

———. 2007. 'Us "Sexuality Types": A Critical Engagement with the Postcoloniality of Sexuality, in Brinda Bose and Subhabrata Bhattacharya (eds), *The Phobic and the Erotic: The Politics of Sexualities in Contemporary India*. Calcutta: Seagull Books.

———. 2009. 'Taming of the Shrewd *Meyeli Chhele*: A Political Economy of Development's Sexual Subject', *Development*, 52, pp. 43–51,

———. 2010. *A Refracted Subject: Sexualness in the Realms of Law and Epidemiology*, Phd Dissertation, University of Edinburgh, draft shared on email.

———. 2011. 'The Social Lives of 377', in Arvind Narrain and Alok Gupta (eds), *Law like Love: Queer Perspectives on Law*. New Delhi: Yoda Press, pp. 174–202.

Khilnani, Sunil. 2002. 'Balanced on a Billion: The Idea of India in the Era of Globalisation', *The Little Magazine*, Vol. V, Nos 4 and 5.

Kidwai, Saleem. 2000. 'Josh Malihabadi: 'There will never be another like you', in Saleem Kidwai and Ruth Vanita (eds), *Same Sex Love in India: Readings from Literature and History*. London: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 274–82.

Kidwai, Saleem and Ruth Vanita (eds). 2000. *Same Sex Love in India: Readings from Literature and History*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.

King, Christopher R. 1992. 'Images of Virtue and Vice: The Hindi–Urdu Controversy in Two Nineteenth-Century Hindi Plays', in Kenneth W. Jones (ed.), *Religious Controversy in British India: Dialogues in South Asian Languages*. New York: State University of New York Press.

Kinsey, Alfred C. 1998 (1948). *Sexual Behavior in the Human Male*. Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press.

Knopp, Sherron. 1992. '"If I Saw You Would You Kiss Me?": Sapphism and the Subversiveness of Virginia Woolf's *Orlando*', in Joseph Bristow (ed.), *Sexual Sameness: Textual Differences in Lesbian and Gay Writing*. London: Routledge, pp. 111–27.

Kulick, Don. 2000. 'Gay and Lesbian Language', *Annual Review of Anthropology*, Vol. 29, pp. 243–85.

Lacan, Jacques. 1966. 'The Insistence of the Letter in the Unconscious', *Yale French Studies*, Nos 36 and 37, pp. 112–47.

Lattimore, R. (translator). 1952. *The Iliad of Homer*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Legg, Stephen. 2012. 'Stimulation, Segregation and Scandal: Geographies of Prostitution Regulation in British India, between Registration (1888) and Suppression (1923)', *Modern Asian Studies*, Vol. 46, No 06, November, pp. 1459–1505.

Lepeska, David. 2010. 'The Life and Times of Agha Ashraf Ali', *Kashmir Observer*. http://www.kashmirobserver.net/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=2201&joscclean=1&comment_id=4341&Itemid=44, accessed on 5 January 2011.

Macaulay, T.B. 1849. *The History of England from the Accession of James II*, Vol. II, Philadelphia: Porter & Coates.

Mapes, Diane. 2004. 'Internet dating: How to find the right site and avoid online horrors,' *The Seattle Times*. http://seattletimes.nwsource.com/html/living/2002025419_internethorror05.html, accessed on 24 November 2009.

Mayhew, Henry. 1861 (1851). *London Labour and the London Poor*. London: Griffin, Bohn, and Company, Stationers' Hall Court.

Mazumdar, Arijit. 2008. *Deregulation of the Airline Industry in India: An Analysis of the Government's Policy, Rationale and Strategy*, PhD Dissertation, Miami University.

Mbembe, A. and J. Roitman. 1995. 'Figures of the Subject in Times of Crisis', *Public Culture*, Vol. 7, No. 2, pp. 323–52.

McClintock, Anne. 2001. 'Soft Soaping Empire: Commodity Racism and Imperial Advertising', in *Double Crossings: Madness, Sexuality and Imperialism*. Vancouver: Ronsdale.

McVeigh, Karen. 2009. 'Gay Community Split over "Depoliticised" London Pride', *The Guardian*.

Meeker, M. 2006. *Contacts Desired: Gay and Lesbian Communications and Community, 1940s–1970s*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Menon, Nivedita. 2005. 'How Natural is Normal? Feminism and Compulsory Heterosexuality', in Arvind Narrain and Gautam Bhan (eds), *Because I Have a Voice: Queer Politics in India*. New Delhi: Yoda Press, pp. 33–39.

———. 2010. 'Introduction', in *Empire and Nation—Selected Essays by Partha Chatterjee*. New York: Columbia University Press, pp. 1–22.

———. 2007. 'Introduction', in Nivedita Menon (ed.), *Sexualities: Issues*

in Contemporary Indian Feminism. New Delhi: Women Unlimited, pp. xiii–lx.

Merchant, Hoshang, 1999, 'Introduction', in Hoshang Merchant (ed.), *Yaraana: Gay Writing from India*. New Delhi: Penguin Books, pp. xi–xxv.

———. 2007. 'Agha Shahid Ali's Kashmir and the Gay Nation', in Brinda Bose and Subhabrata Bhattacharya (eds), *The Phobic and the Erotic: The Politics of Sexualities in Contemporary India*. Kolkata: Seagull Books, pp. 465–70.

———. 1992. *Hotel Golkonda*. Calcutta: Writers Workshop.

Miniwatts Marketing Group. 2008. 'India: Internet Usage Stats and Telecommunications Market Report', http://www.internetworldstats.com/asia/in.htm, accessed on 16 December 2009.

Mody, Perveez. 2006. 'Kidnapping, Elopement and Abduction: An Ethnography of Love-Marriage in Delhi', in Francesca Orsini (ed.), *Love in South Asia: A Cultural History*. Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, pp. 331–44.

Mufti, Aamir R. 2004. 'Towards a Lyric History of India', *boundary* 2, Vol. 31, No. 2, pp. 245–74.

Naim, C.M. 2004a. 'Poet-Audience Interaction in Urdu Musha'irahs', in *Urdu Texts and Contexts: Selected Essays of C.M. Naim*. New Delhi: Permanent Black, pp. 108–19.

———. 2004b. 'Homosexual (Pederastic) Love in Pre-Modern Urdu Poetry' in *Urdu Texts and Contexts: Selected Essays of C.M. Naim*. New Delhi: Permanent Black, pp. 19–41.

Najmabadi, Afsaneh. 2005. *Women with Mustaches and Men without Beards: Gender and Sexual Anxieties of Iranian Modernity*. Berkeley and London: University of California Press.

Nandy, Ashis. 1995. 'The Savage Freud: The First Non-Western Psychoanalyst and the Politics of Secret Selves in Colonial India', in *The Savage Freud and Other Essays on Possible and Retrievable Selves*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, pp. 81–144.

Narayan, R.K. 1981 (1938). *The Dark Room*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Narrain, Arvind and Gautam Bhan. 2005. 'Introduction', in Arvind Narrain and Gautam Bhan (eds), *Because I Have a Voice: Queer Politics in India*. New Delhi: Yoda Press, pp. 1–29.

Orsini, Francesca. 2006a. 'Introduction', in Francesca Orsini (ed.), *Love in South Asia: A Cultural History*. Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, pp. 1–41.

———. 2006b. 'Love Letters', in Francesca Orsini (ed.), *Love in South Asia: A Cultural History*. Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, pp. 228–58.

———. 2009. *The Hindi Public Sphere 1920–1940: Language and Literature in the Age of Nationalism*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press.

Pandey, Bhupendra. 2008 (7 July). 'Maya's new friend history-sheeter Dhananjay Singh', *Express India*, http://www.expressindia.com/latest-news/mayas-new-friend-historysheeter-dhananjay-singh/332272/, accessed on 13 August 2010.

Parivaraj, P. 1991. 'Love Against all Odds', in Aids Bhedbhav Virodhi Andolan (ABVA), *Less Than Gay: A Citizens' Report on the Status of Homosexuality in India*, New Delhi.

Patel, Geeta. 2002. *Lyrical Movements, Historical Hauntings: On Gender, Colonialism and Desire in Miraji's Urdu Poetry*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Pattanaik, Devdutt. 2005. 'Death of the Gay Man', in Arvind Narrain and Gautam Bhan (eds), *Because I Have a Voice: Queer Politics in India*. New Delhi: Yoda Press, pp. 244–47.

Payne, Robert. 2007. 'Gay Scene, Queer Grid', in *Queer Space: Centre and Peripheries*, University of Technology, Sydney. Conference proceedings accessed at http://trove.nla.gov.au/work/35610243?selectedversion=NBD42709440

PlanetRomeoBlog. 2009, 'Guys4men And PlanetRomeo Merging FAQ', http://www.planetromeoblog.com/guys4men-and-planetromeo-merging-faq.html, accessed on 2 December 2009.

Potia, Ali. 2005. 'Islam and Me', in Arvind Narrain and Gautam Bhan (eds), *Because I Have a Voice: Queer Politics in India*. New Delhi: Yoda Press, pp. 252–58.

Priyadarshi, Rajesh. 2009 (5 July). 'Gay Globalization *ka jashn*', http://www.bbc.co.uk/blogs/hindi/2009/07/post-8.html, accessed on 9 December 2010.

Puar, Jasbir. 2002. 'Circuits of Queer Mobility: Tourism, Travel, and Globalization', *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies*, Vol. 8, Nos 1 and 2, pp. 101–37.

———. 2007. *Terrorist Assemblages: Homonationalism in Queer Time*. Durham: Duke University Press.

R.A. 1991. '"Dangerous" Women', in Aids Bhedbhav Virodhi Andolan (ABVA), *Less Than Gay: A Citizens' Report on the Status of Homosexuality in India*, pp. 13–14.

Rabinow, Paul. 1989. *French Modern: Norms and Forms of the Social Environment*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Ranade, Ketaki. 2009. 'Medical Response to Male Same-sex Sexuality in Western India: An Exploration of "Coversion Treatments" for Homosexuality', *Health and Population Innovation Fellowship Programme Working Paper No. 8*, New Delhi: Population Council.

Rao, R. Raj. 2009. 'Hoshang Merchant', interview in R. Raj Rao and Dibyajyoti Sarma (eds), *Whistling in the Dark: Twenty-One Queer Interviews*. New Delhi: Sage Publications, pp. 1–18.

Reddy, Gayatri. 2006. *With Respect to Sex: Negotiating Hijra Identity in South India*. New Delhi: Yoda Press.

Rich, Adrienne. 1976. *Twenty-One Love Poems*, accessed at http://www.sabrinaaiellophotography.com/files/Complete_21_Love_Poems_by_Adrienne_Rich.htm on 5 January 2010.

———. 1980 (first pub), 2003 (extended version). 'Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence', *Journal of Women's History*, Vol. 15, No. 3, pp. 11–48.

Richmond, Len and Gary Noguera. 1973. *The Gay Liberation Book*. San Francisco: Ramparts.

Roy, Nilanjana. S. 2010 (28 April). 'Not just Gay Writing', *Business Standard*, http://www.business-standard.com/india/news/not-just-gay-writing/393177/, accessed on 30 November 2010.

Rubin, Gayle. 1992 (1984). 'Thinking Sex: Notes for a Radical Theory of the Politics of Sexuality', in Carole Vance (ed.), *Pleasure and Danger: Exploring Female Sexuality*. Boston and London: Routledge & Kegan, Paul, pp. 267–319.

Samuel, Bill. 2000. 'The Cadburys: Quaker Social Reformers', http://www.quakerinfo.com/quak_cad.shtml, accessed on 7 May 2011.

Sandip. 1991. 'Black and White', in Aids Bhedbhav Virodhi Andolan (ABVA), *Less Than Gay: A Citizens' Report on the Status of Homosexuality in India*, p. 12.

Saria, Vaibhav. 2005. 'I am Out and Here's Why', in Arvind Narrain and Gautam Bhan (eds), *Because I Have a Voice: Queer Politics in India*. New Delhi: Yoda Press, pp. 267–70.

Sassen, Saskia. 2000. 'Digital Networks and the State: Some Governance Questions', in David Bell and Barbara M. Kennedy (eds), *The Cybercultures Reader*. Oxford: Routledge, pp. 582–93.

Scott, Joan W. 1991. 'The Evidence of Experience', *Critical Inquiry*, Vol. 17, No. 4.

Seabrook, J. 1999. *Love in a Different Climate: The Meaning of Men Who Have Sex With Men In India*. New York: Verso.

Sedgwick, Eve K. 1990. *Epistemology of the Closet*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Shah, Vidya and Aditya Bondyopadhyay (eds). 2007. *My Body is Not Mine: Stories of Violence and Tales of Hope: Voices from the Kothi Community in India*. New Delhi: Naz Foundation International and Centre for Media and Alternative Communication.

Sharma, Jaya and Dipika Nath. 2005. 'Through the Prism of Intersectionality: Same Sex Sexualities in India', in Geetanjali Misra and Radhika Chandiramani (eds), *Sexuality, Gender and Rights: Exploring Theory and Practice in South and Southeast Asia*. New Delhi: Sage Publications, pp. 82–97.

Sharma, Maya. 2005. 'She Came from the World of the Spirits', in Arvind Narrain and Gautam Bhan (eds), *Because I Have a Voice: Queer Politics in India*. New Delhi: Yoda Press, pp. 234–43.

———. 2006. *Loving Women: Being Lesbian in Unprivileged India*. New Delhi: Yoda Press

Sharma, Neha. 2009 (28 December). 'Gay Party Goes On', *Hindustan Times*, http://www.hindustantimes.com/rssfeed/lifestyle/Gay-party-goes-on/Article1-491427.aspx, accessed on 3 January 2010.

Sharma, Pandey Bechan 'Ugra'. 1927a (1953). *Chaklet*. Calcutta: Tondon Brothers.

———. 1927b (1953). '*Kaifiyat*', in *Chaklet*. Calcutta: Tondon Brothers, pg. क–ज.

———. 1927c (June 1928). *Dilli ka Dalal*. Mirzapur City: Beesve Sadi Pustakalya.

———. 1928 (1927). *Chand Haseenon ke Khutoot*. Mirzapur City: Beesve Sadi Pustakalya.

———. 1951. *Jab Saara Aalam Sota Hai*. Agra: Vinoda Pustaka Mandira.

———. 1960. *Apni Khabar*. Dilli: Rajkamal Prakashan Private Limited.

'Sharma, Raj'. 2010 (21 May). 'Juhi: *Ek ladki ke anchue* sexual *anubhav*-1', in *fun-mazza-masti*, http://fun-mazza-masti.blogspot.com/2010/05/1_21.html, accessed on 25 December 2010.

Sharma, Shashi. 2007 (May). 'Aviation Industry in India: Challenges for the Low Cost Carriers', unpublished paper, https://works.bepress.com/shashi_sharma/1/, accessed in December 2010.

Shatir, Gyansingh. 1999. 'Never Take Candy from a Stranger', translated from Urdu by the author and Hoshang Merchant, in Hoshang Merchant (ed.), *Yaraana: Gay Writing from India*. New Delhi: Penguin Books, pp. 152–57.

Shivprasad, Raja. 1868. *Memorandum Court Character in the Upper Provinces of India*, Banaras.

Singh, Khushwant (ed./tr.). 2007. *Celebrating the Best of Urdu Poetry*. New Delhi: Penguin Books.

Smythe, Dallas W. 1981. 'On the Audience Commodity and its Work', in *Dependency Road: Communications, Capitalism, Consciousness and Canada*. Norwood, NJ: Ablex Publishing, pp. 22–52.

Snitow, Ann, Christine Stansell and Sharan Thompson (eds). 1983. *Powers of Desire: The Politics of Sexuality*. New Feminist Library Series. New York: Monthly Review Press

Somani, Alia. 2009 (October). 'Getting Together in Cyberspace: Negotiating Orthodoxy and Modernity in South Asian Matrimonial Sites', paper presented in Madison, Wisconsin.

Stanley, Eric. A. 2011. 'Introduction—Fugitive Flesh: Gender Self-Determination, Queer Abolition, and Trans Resistance', in Eric A. Stanley and Nat Smith (eds), *Captive Genders: Trans Embodiment and the Prison Industrial Complex*. AK Press: Oakland, pp. 1–11.

Steele, Laurel. 1981. 'Hali and his *Muqadamma*: The Creation of a Literary Attitude in Nineteenth Century India', *Annual of Urdu Studies 1*, pp. 1–45.

Stoler, Ann Laura. 1995. *Race and the Education of Desire: Foucault's* History of Sexuality *and the Colonial Order of Things*. London: Duke University Press.

Sukhthankar, Ashiwini. 1999. 'Introduction' in Ashiwini Sukhthankar (ed.), *Facing the Mirror: Lesbian Writing from India*. New Delhi: Penguin Books, pp. xiii–xli.

'Suman', Ramnathlal. 1927 (1953). 'Aprakritik Vyabhichaar Ka Vaigyanik Vivechan', in, Pandey Bechan 'Ugra' Sharma's *Chaklet*. Calcutta: Tondon Brothers, pp. 21–62.

Sundaram, Ravi. 2010. *Pirate Modernity: Delhi's Media Urbanism*. New York and Oxon: Routledge.

Tejani, Sheba. 2005. 'Convivial Misgivings', in Arvind Narrain and Gautam Bhan (eds), *Because I Have a Voice: Queer Politics in India*. New Delhi: Yoda Press, pp. 271–73.

Terry, C.V. 1948 (11 January). Review: 'The City and the Pillar', *The New York Times*, http://www.nytimes.com/books/98/03/01/home/vidal-pillar.html, accessed on 29 December 2010.

Thackeray, Bal. 1998. Quoted, 'Hindu leader says lesbian film should be about Moslem family', http://www.sawnet.org/news/fire.html, accessed on 31 January 2009.

Thapar, Romila. 1982. 'Ideology and the Interpretation of Early Indian History', *Review* (Fernand Braudel Center), Vol. 5, No. 3, Winter, pp. 389–411.

The Associated Press. 1956. 'Dr. Kinsey is Dead; Sex Researcher, 62', *The New York Times*, 26 August.

The Times of India. 2004 (5 December). 'Extortionists demand Rs. 10 lakh, held'.

Time. 1948 (1 March). 'Manners & Morals: How to Stop Gin Rummy'.

———. 1966 (21 January). 'The Homosexual in America', pp. 40–41.

Vanita, Ruth. 2002. '*Dosti* and *Tamanna*: Male-Male Love, Difference, and Normativity in Hindi Cinema', in Diane P. Mines and Sarah Lamb (eds) *Everyday life in South Asia*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, pp. 146–58.

Warner, Michael. 1993. *Fear of a Queer Planet: Queer Politics and Social Theory*. London and Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Weeks, Jefferey. 1986. *Sexuality*. London: Routledge.

WGLB. 2011 (29 January). 'Ugandan lesbian Brenda Namigadde's asylum was rejected because she didn't own magazines', http://wglb-tv.blogspot.com/2011/01/ugandan-lesbian-brenda-namigaddes.html, accessed on 5 February 2011.

White, Edmund. 2009. *City Boy: My Life in New York During the 1960s and '70s*. New York: Bloomsbury.

Wilde, Oscar. 2007 (1890). *The Picture of Dorian Gray*. London: W. W. Norton & Co.

Wittman, Carl. 1972. 'Refugees from Amerika: A Gay Manifesto', in Karfa Jay and Allen Young (eds), *Out of the Closet: Voices from Gay Liberation*. New York: Douglas Books, pp. 330–41.

Žižek, Slavoj. 1989. *The Sublime Object of Ideology*. London: Verso.

———. 1999 (15 November). 'Human Rights and its Discontents', Lecture and Q&A, Bard College, New York. http://www.lacan.com/zizek-human.htm, accessed in February 2011.

PERSONALLY CONDUCTED INTERVIEWS

Bhan, Gautam, April 2010, London.

Charan, July 2007, New Delhi.

D'Souza, Rahul, March 2007, New Delhi.

Kidwai, Saleem, July 2010, Lucknow.

Merchant, Hoshang, July 2010, Hyderabad.

Jens, February 2010, on email, London.

This ground-breaking work argues that 'homosexuality' cannot capture the many intersecting idioms of same-sex desire in India whose breadth and romance extend far beyond the term. Instead, Akhil Katyal argues that 'sexuality' is marked by a 'doubleness', a constant tension between how sexuality is conceptualised and how it is lived out, ensuring that 'gay' or 'lesbian' identities remain open-ended. Studying early to mid-20th century Hindi/Urdu literature and recent Indian 'gay'/'lesbian' writing and activism, Katyal advances his arguments with a vigour and freshness that make for a deeply conceptually rooted yet extraordinarily light text that's a pleasure to read.

Akhil Katyal (PhD, SOAS)
is a writer, teacher and translator based in Delhi.

NEW TEXT
www.newtext.in
Cover Design: Pavitr Rastogi

₹ 450

ISBN 1-63587-832-2
9 781635 878325